Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Timothy P. McConnell

emerging scholars

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Fortress Press
Minneapolis

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Cover design: Alisha Lofgren

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Print ISBN: 978-1-4514-8277-5

eBook ISBN: 978-1-4514-8444-1

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences — Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z329.48-1984.

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

This book was produced using PressBooks.com, and PDF rendering was done by PrinceXML.

If revelation is to be taken seriously as God's presence, if there is to be a valid belief in revelation, then in no sense can Christ and the Spirit be subordinate hypostases. Revelation and Revealing must be equal to the Revealer.

Karl Barth

He is the source of sanctification, spiritual light, who gives illumination to everyone using His powers to search for the truth—and the illumination He gives is Himself.

Basil

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Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
ECF	Early Christian Fathers
Ep., Epp.	*Epistle, Epistles*
Eun.	*Against Eunomius*
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. W. Jaeger (Leiden)
GOTR	*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
Hex.	*Hexaemeron*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	The Septuagint
NPNF^{2}	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series*
OCP	*Orientalia christiana periodica*
PG	Patrologia graeca, Migne
PL	Patrologia latina, Migne
PS	Catholic University of America Patristic Studies
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
StPatr	Studia Patristica
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, London
Spir.	*On the Holy Spirit*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*

Biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Holy Bible unless otherwise noted.

Preface

Knowledge of God is a difficult subject in any age. Only with great difficulty did Karl Barth explain to his students his conviction that the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ is nevertheless a God who is hidden. "It is the *Deus revelatus* who is the *Deus absconditus*, the God to whom there is no path nor bridge, concerning whom we could not say nor have to say a single word if He did not of His own initiative meet us as the *Deus revelatus*."[1] How can you know God, and yet not know God? How can God be revealed, but never become for a moment the passive object of our intrusive activity of comprehension? For Barth, and his students in the theology of revelation, the answer came in the Holy Spirit. Our knowledge of God does not come by our intellectual penetration of divine things, but by revelation: revelation that the Revealer must control and authenticate to become knowledge of God in the one to whom it has been revealed. The Holy Spirit is necessary for an operation like that. The Holy Spirit produces and governs the knowledge of God in the believer.

Barth's era was not the first time the self-authenticating revelation of God caused heads to be scratched. Basil of Caesarea wrestled with this issue in his own times, long before the rise of the theologians of revelation. Intent on articulating the possibility of knowledge of God and the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Basil returned again and again to Psalm 36:9, *In your light we see light*. Knowledge of God was an experience of revelation, not a conquest, leading one to humble worship, not intellectual pride. As theologians, those who would use words to speak of God and describe our relationship to God, the material available for our art is found within the divine light whereby we see light. We do not deploy our imaginations to construct notions of God. Rather, within the confines of revelation, the material we take to hand for our art is the content of divine self-disclosure. Basil knew this. In the first known treatise dedicated fully to the theological explication of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Basil demonstrated this. In his battles with Eunomius, Basil defended this. It is Basil—ecclesial, political, episcopal, monastic, pulpiteering Basil—who proves to be the seedbed of the theology of revelation. Basil's distinct and unrelenting discipline to respect the confines of divine self-disclosure in the middle of a

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 321.

heated debate over the divinity of the Holy Spirit set a tone for theology for all who followed, including his Cappadocian colleagues. That is what this book is about.

This work could not have come about without the aid of many colleagues. I am grateful to Robert Louis Wilken, who supervised the project behind this book intent on producing a scholar of patristics. I am grateful for generous insights from Brian Daley, Richard Vaggione, and Christopher Beeley, who granted prepublication access to his book on Gregory of Nazianzus. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz quickened my progress by sharing an early draft of their translation of Basil's *Against Eunomius*. I have tried to note where my translation leans on their fine work. Generous conversations with my friends, particularly Richard Bishop and Keith Starkenburg, fed every chapter. But my most privileged thanks is reserved for my loving family, and most of all my wife Abigail, to whom this work is dedicated.

Introduction: Basil and Knowledge of God

If Basil of Caesarea receives mention in a standard course of lectures on Christian theology or history, it is as the first person to write a dedicated discourse on the Holy Spirit. Ironically, the primary question about Basil for scholars is whether he fully believed in the divinity of the Holy Spirit himself. Was he harboring a reticence to view the Spirit as fully God? This question is raised by his own closest colleagues, who expressed frustration that Basil would not speak of the Holy Spirit as God in no uncertain terms.

Basil did regard the Holy Spirit as fully divine and an equal Person of the Holy Trinity. However, Basil refused to use philosophical terminology to make this point. He refused to be pushed into stating things in terms not found in Scripture. Why should paradigms of philosophy constructed by the human mind be regarded as more effective for proving the divinity of the Holy Spirit than what the Spirit himself has revealed through divine act and Holy Scripture? Why should Christian leaders be pushed into theological sloganeering about something as important as the being and action of the Divine Trinity?

Basil argued for the divinity of the Holy Spirit under a theological paradigm we could call "illumination." Using the overstretched philosophical rationalism of his opponent Eunomius as a foil, Basil argued that God is unknown in his essence but made known through his activities. Three primary activities of the Spirit convinced Basil that the Holy Spirit is fully divine: spiritual illumination at baptism, creation, and the inspiration of Scripture. Each of these will be explored in the coming chapters. In Basil's view, to be in the Holy Spirit is to be in the light of God where knowledge of God is possible; the Spirit illumines the mind to understand what has been disclosed and therefore what can be professed of the knowledge of God. What Basil called illumination, later theologians would come to refer to as a theology of revelation.

At the critical moment, a group emerged in Cappadocia able to articulate a defense of what has become an unequivocal essential in Christian theology for the church: that God is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one divinity in three Persons. The story of how the Cappadocians bested the heresies opposed to them has been rehearsed many times since the fifth century. Recent investigations of Arius, Aetius, and Eunomius have offered a new look at

these counterparties. These studies have helped scholars recognize the potential viability of the Non- and Anti-Nicene movements and their foundations in biblical and patristic writings, serving to illustrate the true heat of the battle over the authority of the Nicene Creed and its vision of the Trinity, and the critical importance of this moment in the history of Christian dogmatics. In the story of the Cappadocian conquest, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa are each granted their place. Basil is portrayed as a powerful ecclesiast but a limited theologian, stammering forward into the issue of the Holy Spirit for polemical reasons but falling short of what finally needed to be said. Gregory of Nazianzus was open with declaring that the Holy Spirit is God. Basil refrained. Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, was left with the task of defending the frailties of Basil's writings in order to retain his ecclesial authority for posterity. In the pages that follow, I reshape this telling of history by offering a more accurate understanding of the theological concerns and capabilities of Basil of Caesarea.

Historians err either by conflating these three figures into one voice and ignoring their distinctive personal contributions, or by exaggerating their differences to glorify one thinker over the others. At present there is need for more careful differentiation. After the rediscovery of the importance of Gregory of Nyssa to the development of Christian thought in the middle of the twentieth century, Gregory came to be regarded as the primary voice of Cappadocian thought.[1] Gregory of Nazianzus is enjoying renewed interest as a biblical theologian who presents his thought in sermons and orations steeped in the Scriptures. Basil remains the bishop. No deep thinker or careful orator, so the theme goes, Basil is the one who pulled the political strings and exercised the power of his authority to give the Cappadocians a voice on the world stage and to secure the political will for an eventual Pro-Nicene victory. But if this is so, why were Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa so confident in Basil?

1. The explosion of interest in Gregory of Nyssa in the middle of the twentieth century was instrumental in reshaping the field of patristic scholarship. Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac emphasized biblically engaged texts for Sources Chrétiennes, and ushered in an era of understanding patristic theology as a product of argument over the meaning of the Bible rather than as a series of propositions superseding one another, or theses and antitheses in progression. See, for example: Robert Wilken, "*In Dominico Eloquio*: Learning the Lord's Style of Language" *Communio* 24 (1997): 846–66; Charles Kannengiesser, "A Key for the Future of Patristics: The 'Senses' of Scripture," in *In Dominico Eloquio— In Lordly Eloquence*, ed. Paul Blowers, et al (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 90–106. Bibliography on interest in Gregory of Nyssa is found in Michel Barnes, *The Power of God:* Δύναμις *in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 220n1, and Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 97n1.

They claimed that Basil was the spearhead of their movement and had shown them the way forward.[2] The role of Basil the (less theologically sophisticated) bishop can certainly be argued, but there was also an aroma of Christian faith shared by the Gregories that they attributed to Basil, and before him to Macrina, his older sister. There was something in the theological and spiritual perspective of Basil that inspired. Recent studies, the present case included, is taking a more careful look at the contribution of Basil and how he inspired his Cappadocian colleagues. There is more to this man than has been recovered.

One consistent message in the writings of Basil is that human language is limited and a word does not necessarily disclose the nature of a thing. When a word is uttered, it references the essence of the thing spoken about, but does not entirely characterize the thing referred; in fact, it does not even fully convey the thought of the speaker. A person stands between the utterance and the thought with hopeful anticipation that the words move the mind in the proper direction toward the thing itself. Human language so characterized, and subject to the limitations of its grammar, is inadequate to convey the knowledge of God. If every human statement in every language in every time was summed up together, "even if all minds, in fact, should combine their researches and all tongues would concur in their utterance, never, as I have said, could anyone achieve a worthy result."[3] Wearied by the Trinitarian debates with their parsing of terms better left to philosophers, and discouraged by his early failures at debating over these terms, Basil sought to recapture a tone for theological discourse seasoned with reverence and mystery. Basil reminded his friend and his brother—or else they learned together from Origen and others—that theology is a limited science, responding to the revealed knowledge of God with a discipline of speaking only that which has been given, and recognizing that all claims are contingent upon divine action. The words used in theological discourse are signs, leading the mind toward a

2. Gregory of Nyssa writes that the wisdom he received from his older brother is too large to be contained within his heart (*On the Making of Man* pref; PG 44, 125B), and when he expounds upon the *Hexaemeron*, he points out that the seeds of his thought were planted by Basil: "The teacher's few words effect an increase—such appropriate utterances derive from a lofty philosophy; it is not the ear but the tree according to which the kingdom of heaven was compared, that is, a mustard seed. . . . I follow the example of a tiny sprout whose sap has been stirred up by the wisdom of our wise teacher and will attempt to grow into a branch. Although it has already been planted, it is my responsibility to water it." (*On the Hexaemeron*; PG 44, 61A–64A). Gregory of Nyssa privileges the original idea as more important than its development. Gregory of Nazianzus praises Basil's preaching and teaching as "a trumpet penetrating the immensity of space, a voice of God encompassing the world, or a universal earthquake . . . his voice and mind were all of these." *Funerary Oration on St. Basil, Oration* 43.65.5–10 (SC: 268).

3. Basil, *Concerning Faith* (prologue 8) 3 (PG 31, 684B; Wagner: 63)

referent that cannot be comprehended and toward truths that are ultimately ineffable.[4] The theologian can point toward the sun but cannot bear to look into its light.

Not that Basil claimed God is unknown. Far from it. But in an environment where men like Eunomius were claiming to comprehend the essence of divine being the way a mathematician comprehends the Pythagorean theorem, or a carpenter comprehends the structure of an apple cart, Basil argued that something more mysterious is going on in the knowledge of God. God can be known, but only as God has revealed, only as God discloses self-revelation in the context of a proper relationship with the recipient of revelation. That is, only within the paradigms set and monitored, allowed and managed by God the Holy Spirit. In short, Basil spoke of knowledge of God only within the confines of illumination.

The fourth century is marked with multiple parties in the church claiming to arrange themselves around theories of divine essence in the relationship between the Father and the Son. By the time Basil emerged on the scene, there were distinguishable parties over a wide range of convictions. There were Anhomoians, or Heterousians like Aetius and Eunomius who were faithful to the theology of Arius in arguing that the Father, Son and Spirit are different "essentially." Homoians like Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia claimed that the Son is like the Father in all things according to the Scriptures, but would say no more. Homoiousians such as Basil of Ancyra and Meletius of Antioch claimed only a likeness of essence. But the Homoousians were striving to promote the Nicene position of Athanasius, claiming the authority and heritage of the great council of 325. Finally, there were modalists who claimed that the appearance of the Son was merely a temporary extension of the divine monad.[5]

4. This principle is found in Basil's treatise *Against Eunomius*: "Since whatever the theologians appear to have recorded about the essence of God has been expressed in figurative language (τροπολογίαις) or even in allegories (ἀλληγορίαις), the words carry us toward other meanings. If someone contentiously stands on the mere letter, taking it at its simple meaning without rightly examining it, then he . . . will grow old in abject poverty, without any worthy concept of God . . . since it has been demonstrated that the essence of God is incomprehensible to human nature and completely ineffable (ἀπερινόητος ἀνθρώπου φύσει χαὶ ἄρρητος παντελῶς ἡ οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ)." *Eun.* 1.14.20–27, 45–47 (SC 1:222–24); cf. *Concerning Baptism* 1.2.5. Philip Rousseau writes, "He pointed out that what gave even little words their importance was their δύναμις—literally, their power: the momentum, as it were, that carried the hearer or reader from sign to meaning." *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 122.

5. I refer the reader who seeks detailed engagement with these parties to Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 133–86, and then also to extended treatments of this period in: R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988),

Until recently, historical interest in Basil has centered on the development of his position from an affiliation with the Homoiousion group to a Pro-Nicene, or Homoousion position. Although he was reticent about applying rigorous terminology, the slogans that Basil did accept changed in the course of his career.[6] Early letters to Apollinarius of Laodicea (*Epp.* 361–64) express deep concerns about the appropriateness of the term *homoousios*, while later works argue forcefully for this vocabulary. Explanations of this development can be organized under three primary perspectives. The first is the argument that Basil followed Basil of Ancyra in the doctrine of "like according to essence" (ὅμοις κατ' οὐσίαν) and found a way to create political confluence behind that notion, by loosening the meaning of the Nicene "consubstantial" (ὁμοούσιος) terminology, and creating the so-called Neo-Nicene movement. The second group is those scholars who see Basil as flirting with the "like-in-essence" (ὁμοιούσιος) party, but becoming convinced by Athanasius to devote himself to the Nicene "consubstantial/*homoousios*" party in the mid 360s. The final group, and the most recent, is those who argue that Basil is an example of Pro-Nicenism emerging in Asia Minor as it simultaneously emerged in the Latin West and in the East. Note that these studies approach Basil's writings primarily to find relevant allusions to the raging battles of theological and political parties organized around terminologies of divine essence, but this work finds that Basil is distinctly resistant to being classified under those rubrics. Basil's relation to terminologically determined groups has been the subject of a few monographs under the same theme.[7] All the while, Basil's own position was developing

181–398; Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 133–360; John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology,* vol.Two: *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 61–122.

6. Manlio Simonetti, *La Crisi Ariana nel IV Secolo* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1975), 401–34; Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 361–440; Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. M. Westerhoff, ed. A. Louth (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 142–43; Behr, *Nicene*, 264–65; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 187–243. These scholars follow the interpretation of Harnack, who first suggested that Basil was affiliated with the *homoiousion* position of Basil of Ancyra at the beginning of his career, prior to arguing forcefully for Nicea. Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol 2, 5th ed. (Tübingen, 1931), 259–84. See also: Johannes Quasten, *Patrology,* vol 3 (Utrecht/Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers, 1960), 230. A helpful summary of these viewpoints, and defense of the term Pro-Nicene, is offered by Ayres, *Nicaea*, 236–40.

7. Volker Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg von Homöusianer zum Neonizäner*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 66 (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1996); Bernard Sesboüé, *Saint Basile et la Trinité, un acte théologique au IVe siècle* (Paris: Desclée, 1998); Stephen Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007). Other scholarship has

in a different direction entirely, in fact, along a different axis intersecting the plane from the dimension of revelation and illumination. These terms of divine essence do not define Basil's position. Basil developed his own position founded on his faithfulness to revealed text and divine act.

Therefore, it is not the purpose of what follows to satisfy the debate concerning which group of theologians defined by terminologies of divine essence is the group to which Basil properly belongs. Basil was attempting to change the terms of the debate. If we are going to speak of "development" in Basil's Trinitarian theology, it cannot be reduced to simply "switching parties."[8] Basil first tried to find his place among the groups as they stood. This position is best represented by his *Epistle* 361, in which he expresses his concerns about the term ὁμοιούσίος:

> So then if anyone should speak of the essence of the Father as a noetic light, eternal and unbegotten, then he should speak also of the essence of the Only-Begotten as a noetic light, eternal and unbegotten. It seems to me that the phrase *invariably similar* [ἀπαραλλάκτως ὁμοίου] fits better for such a meaning than *consubstantial* [ὁμοουσίου].[9]

But soon Basil realized that while all of these groups formed around various claims about the essence of God, he was himself becoming convinced that the claim to know the essence of God at all was impious and was the source of the discord and fracture of the body of Christ. So, he said, "It is proper for the very essence of God to be incomprehensible to everyone except the Only-Begotten and the Holy Spirit," and if we are to claim to know anything of the essence of God, it is only "that we receive comprehension of his perfect goodness and wisdom when we are led up from the activities [ἐνεργειῶν] of God to gain a conception [σύνεσιν] of the maker through the things he has made."[10]

explored Basil's activity in the Neo-Arian disputes in wholly sociopolitical terms. See, for example, the three-part series of Raymond Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), and *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); see also Andrea Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

8. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 12.

9. Basil, *Ep.* 361.27–31 (Courtonne 3:221). Cf. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 188–91.

10. *Eun.* 1.14.14–19 (SC 1:220).

The turning point came when the young, accomplished master of rhetoric made his first entry into theological debate, thrust forward to confront Aetius and Eunomius at Constantinople in 360 AD. For all the promise and hope vested in him, Basil failed so miserably that he spent the next few years withdrawn from the public sphere. This event is explored further in chapter 4. It was then that Basil's confidence in rhetoric was irreparably fractured. After 360, he no longer wished to strike a blow for those who properly claimed knowledge of God's essence, but instead began to articulate a theology that respected the mystery of God's essence and returned to a humble recognition of the natural limitations of human logic. Basil believed this would not only maintain the integrity of Christian worship, but ultimately heal the church of its polemical divisions.[11]

Recent studies of the Pro-Nicene movement and the role of the Cappadocians have brought penetrating insights into the nature of Trinitarian theology. None of them have answered the most enduring question about Basil, however: Why did Basil stop short of calling the Holy Spirit God or using the word *homoousios* of the Spirit? Some scholars claim that Basil did not, in fact, believe that the Holy Spirit was truly God in the same way that the Father and the Son are God.[12] Benoît Pruche and others say that Basil demonstrated an economy of language for the sake of the unity of the church,[13] and none could dispute that even at the height of the battle over the Trinity few men surpassed Basil in ecumenical hope.[14] Basil's terminological reserve remains a mystery. In what follows, I hope to lift a layer of that fog by claiming that Basil's failure to employ certain terminologies was intentional, and it was intended to argue for, not against, the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The following study argues that

11. Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil*, 19.

12. Anthony Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 48 (1981): 205, but later retracted in *The Cappadocians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 33. Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 298–301.

13. Benoît Pruche, *Basile de Césarée: Sur le Saint-Esprit*, SC 17 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 102.

14. "Is there not a far greater obligation then upon the whole Church of God to be zealous in maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? . . . It is so obviously and undeniably essential for unity to be fully realized in the whole Church at once, according to the will of Christ in the Holy Spirit, and, on the other hand, disobedience to God through mutual discord is so dangerous and fatal."*On the Judgment of God* 4 (PG 31, 660C–661A; Wagner, 42–43). Bernard Sesboüé writes: "Il se fait aussi l'apôtre de l'unité : sa passion constante est de restaurer dans la communion de la foi le tissu des communautés chrétiennes de l'Orient, plusieurs fois déchiré par la crise arienne. Se le terme n'était pas anachronique en ce sens, on pourrait le présenter comme le témoin et le prophète de l'attitude œcuménique." *Saint Basile: Contre Eunome*, vol 1, SC 299 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982), 46.

Basil sought to reclaim the wonder of revelation in theology, and used language sparingly in a manner sometimes misunderstood by his peers. Basil said all that could be said and laid the rest of his hopes, and confidence, on the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds of his readers to draw the necessary conclusions—that is, to draw the reader into a pious posture of worship before the revelation of the knowledge of God. Basil articulates a theology that is dependent on the personal presence of the divine, a true theology of illumination in which the very ground and grammar of theological discourse must remain dependent upon the continuing activity of the Holy Spirit. For Basil, the reach of the claims of theology surrounding the terminologies of divine essence had surpassed their grasp and humility needed to be restored.[15]

Basil's argument for the divinity of the Holy Spirit works by illustrating what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit illumines and sanctifies the baptized. The Holy Spirit completes and perfects creation from the beginning of time to its end and illumines the mind of the believer to understand the message of its order. The Holy Spirit inspires the Scriptures and governs their understanding in the church.[16] Making no claim to know the essence of God, Basil also leaves no doubt that the Holy Spirit has revealed his divinity through his actions. Only God does what only God can do.

15. Basil wrote of humility: "O that man had abided in the glory he had from God and retained a genuine rather than a false dignity, made great by the power of God, brightened by divine wisdom, ever enjoying eternal life and its benefits. But since he turned from the desire for divine glory, expecting to find something greater, and strove after what cannot be attained, he lost what was possible for him to hold, his salvation most of all and the cure for his ills. The restoration to his original state can be found only in practicing humility and not pretending to claim some glory through his own efforts, but seeking to receive from God." *On Humility* 1 (PG 31, 525AB).

16. I do not wish to associate modern theories of plenary inspiration with the attitude of the fathers. The point is that the coherence of the Old and New Testaments rests in patristic theology upon the singular personality of the Spirit of God. "On the nature and extent of inspiration ancient Christian writers speak with an absence of reserve which is not in accordance with our present estimate. The Holy Scriptures were regarded as the writings of the Holy Spirit; any who did not believe that they were spoken by the Spirit was counted an unbeliever." Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 383. Cf. Basil, *Concerning Baptism* 2.4.

1

Illumination and the Holy Spirit

New interest in Basil is the product of a desire to carefully differentiate the voices of the Cappadocian Fathers. It is also borne of the desire to locate and value ideas at their inception, to recognize the moment of initial articulation of an idea in Christian dogmatics, whether or not it is the fullest or clearest articulation of that idea. Basil entered the debate about the divinity of the Holy Spirit with fresh eyes and a different perspective than most. His concern was ever with piety, worship, and reverence, practicing theology as a branch of the monastic and ecclesial life. Others surpassed him in concern for clarity, philosophical rigor, and careful argumentation. Still, he entered the debate with his own unique theological grammar as he began to make his contribution.

Illumination and the Knowledge of God

Lewis Ayres emphasizes the importance of Basil's use of the term ἐπίνοια for Basil's theory of language and theological epistemology.[1] Basil chose this term to describe the type of knowledge of God that is possible for the believer. One does not come to knowledge of God's essence, but to knowledge of what God chooses to reveal; one comes to knowledge of God's activity (ἐνέργεια). These activities disclose something of God without submitting God to the powerless position of being an object of human investigation, or suggesting that God's essence is apprehended by human rationality and circumscribed entirely in human language. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz refers to this as "Basil's concern to articulate how humans can have meaningful knowledge of God that is not knowledge of God's essence."[2] It is not that Christians worship what is entirely unknown, but it is also not accurate for Basil to suggest that the actual nature or

1. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 191–98. Cf. Basil, *Eun.* 1.6–8.

2. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 113.

essence of God is the subject of human comprehension. Ayres writes, "Human knowledge of God does thus not suffer from a constant or ruinous lack, but is actively shaped by God to draw a wounded humanity back towards its creator through a slow reshaping of human thought and imagination."[3] These insights have brought renewed attention to Basil's theological epistemology and his clear personal development in this area. In reaction to Eunomius's overconfidence in the logic of human rational capacity, Basil sought to restore humility to theological discourse, and to articulate a type of knowledge of God that is dependent on the faithfulness of God in active divine self-disclosure. What remains is to explore just how this epistemological insight alters our understanding of Basil's pneumatology. Did this view of the knowledge of God shape Basil's view of the activity of the Holy Spirit? Would it be feasible to say, in fact, that this epistemological stretching pressed Basil toward more emphasis on the Holy Spirit? Basil staked his arguments on a theory of the knowledge of God that depends on the constant and faithful activity of God in the mind of the believer, making the claim that it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that this knowledge of God is made possible. Basil began to articulate a theory of the Holy Spirit as the one who illumines the mind for knowledge of God.

In the opening book and chapter of *On First Principles*, Origen quotes Psalm 36:9: "[God] is that light, surely, which lightens the whole understanding of those who are capable of receiving truth, as it is written in the thirty-fifth psalm, *In thy light shall we see light*."[4] Origen had also written that the Holy Spirit illumined Paul's mind as he was inspired to write what he did,[5] and that the mind of the reader of Scripture is given grace by the Holy Spirit to understand the higher meaning of what is written.[6]

Basil, a devotee of Origen, maintains and expands the metaphor of illumination throughout his theology. In *Against Eunomius*, while contending with Eunomius's assertion that there is a time prior to the generation of the Son, Basil makes a stirring statement about the source of the knowledge of God:

3. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 196.

4. *On First Principles* 1.1.1 (GCS: 17.6–9; Butterworth: 7). Psalm 35:10, LXX.

5. *On First Principles* 2.5.4.

6. "Then there is the doctrine that the Scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. The contents of Scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things. On this point the entire Church is unanimous, that while the whole law is spiritual, the inspired meaning is not recognized by all, but only by those who are gifted with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the word of wisdom and knowledge." Ibid., pref. 8 (GCS: 14.6–13; Butterworth: 5).

> So then the mind conceiving of something temporally prior to the Only-Begotten is foolish and crazed, and in reality has understood nothing. *In your light*, it says, *we see light*. This one [Eunomius] is claiming that he has come to grasp "when the light was not yet," and so is like a delirious man who imagines seeing something that is not actually there. What is prior to the Son cannot be known. What the visible light is to the eye, God the Word is to the mind.[7]

Basil associates illumination with the Son, the Logos. This illumination makes knowledge of spiritual things possible just as perceptible light in this world makes the eye see. It is impossible for sight to precede the light that makes it possible. By the time Basil writes *On the Holy Spirit*, about ten years later, he associates illumination strongly with the Spirit.

> If we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source, it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge. He gives those who love the vision of truth the power that enables them to gain the image in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ]. He does not reveal it to them from outside sources, but leads them to knowledge in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ]. *No one knows the Father except the Son* [Matt. 11:27], and *No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit* [1 Cor. 12:3]. Notice that it does not say "through" the Spirit, but "in" the Spirit. It also says, *God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth* [John 4:24], and *In Your light do we see light* [Ps. 36:9], through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, *the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world* [John 1:9].[8]

Basil has taken his initial conviction that knowledge of God is the product of illumination by the Logos of God further into the assertion that the Spirit is the beginning of the process of divine self-disclosure. It is only in the Spirit that one can expect to *say* and—as Basil interprets here—to *know* that Jesus is Lord, and so it is only through the Spirit that one can be illumined.

What Basil means by spiritual illumination will be explored again and again through the pages that follow. Illumination is an experience of the

7. *Eun.* 2.16.10–19 (SC 2:62).

8. *Spir.* 18.47.1–16 (SC 17:412). It is significant that Basil interprets John 1:9 as a reference to the Spirit, as will be explored further.

presence of God. It is knowledge of God, as Basil defines it.[9] As Georges Florovsky interprets Basil, human knowledge of God is based on revelation; it has "been established not by logic but by experience and revelation. A logical structure has only been superimposed on the testimony of revelation in order to give it form."[10] Basil taught that we know God by the experience of the activities of God, and these are experiences of revelation.[11] Rational exposition of this revelation follows behind the knowledge itself. Florovsky appropriately uses *revelation* and *illumination* interchangeably in his discussion of Basil, since in Basil's mind they were the same thing. Illumination is both the knowledge of God and the capacity that makes that knowledge possible; the one accompanies the other. That is why Psalm 36:9 is such a vivid picture for Basil. In God's light is where the light of God is seen. This doctrine of divine illumination is shared by Gregory of Nazianzus[12] and suffuses the thought of Gregory of Nyssa[13] such that for the Cappadocians in general, "the theology of light becomes a mechanism for articulating the intellectual self-giving of the Trinity and the diffusing of divine knowledge through the cosmos."[14]

There is good reason to explore Basil's influence on Augustine, for whom divine illumination was also a consistent theme. The "light of men" in John 1 is the light by which we see all things, Augustine claimed.[15] In his *Confessions*, he relates how in his study of philosophy he failed to find enlightenment: "I had my back to the light and my face was turned towards the things which it illumined, so that my eyes, by which I saw the things which stood in the light,

9. *Epp.* 234 and 235. See below.

10. Georges Florovsky, *Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (Vaduz, Europa: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 97.

11. Florovsky recognized that this portrayal of Basil's experience of revelation left him open to the charge of relativism: "There is no reason to accuse Basil of relativism. He does not deny the objectivity of human cognition, but he places greater stress on the mind's activeness. For Basil the process of cognition is valuable as a religious experience because in cognition man achieves intellectual communication with God. There are many names which tell man about God and express man's participation in the various forms of Revelation, which is 'manifold in its activity, but simple in its essence.' Basil's teaching on our knowledge of God expresses his basic concept of man as a dynamic being who is always in the process of becoming." Therefore, while the experience of revelation is subjective, the objectivity lies in the Revealer, the simple essence that is manifold in activity. Ibid., 90.

12. Cf. *Oration* 31.3, where the Trinity itself is the source and location of the illumination.

13. *Against Eunomius* 1.530–34 (GNO 1:179–181); or 1.36 (NPNF2 5:84–85).

14. A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109.

15. In *Tractate on John* 3.4, Augustine calls it the light of the minds of all men, which is above all minds and resources them all. Cf. Ronald Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 107.

were themselves in darkness."[16] Augustine recounts the moment when he found his soul's home in the Lord while reading Scripture: "In an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled."[17] Divine light, for Augustine, is the very presence of God: "Enter God's presence and find there enlightenment."[18] One is either in divine light and therefore in the presence of God with knowledge, or in the darkness.

The Bible is replete with images of light and dark, but Basil and Augustine apply this metaphor to epistemological dimensions in deep and abiding ways. They share the conviction that knowledge of God is impossible outside of the divine light. A further similarity is found in their treatment of the Holy Spirit as a location for communion with God. In Augustine, the Holy Spirit is the love instilled in the believer's heart that draws the believer into loving desire for God.[19] This is not so different from the noetic light of the Spirit we see outlined in Basil in his affinity to Psalm 36:9. Basil's explorations into the metaphor of light may have influenced more than just the Cappadocian tradition.

Basil did not argue for the divinity of the Holy Spirit deductively from propositions claiming to know the essence of God, but rather, as he claimed theology must be practiced, he argued from the activities of the Holy Spirit. God discloses himself through his activities, in Basil's view, and so it is from the activities that knowledge of God is formed in the human mind and about the activities of God that we can speak. Basil argues that the Holy Spirit is the illuminating power in the human mind, allowing the mind to see by the light of the glory of God.

There are moments of convergence in the history of Christian thought when the ideas of many can, of a sudden, be expressed in simple formula. These moments are genuinely celebrated when the theologian who governs them speaks in such simple clarity of language that the confession can be shared universally, and with such profound depth of meaning that it may be mined for renewed theological expression in every generation. Basil's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is just this sort of convergence. Basil expressed his doctrine in

16. *Confessions* 4.16.30 (Simonetti 2:44; Pine-Coffin: 88). This is reminiscent of a little-known sermon of Basil: "With a small turning of the eye, we are either facing the sun or facing the shadow of our own body. Thus one who looks upward easily finds illumination, but for one who turns toward the shadow darkening is inevitable." *Homily That God Is Not the Author of Evil* 8 (PG 31, 348A; Harrison: 76).

17. *Confessions* 8.12.29 (Simonetti 3:102; Pine-Coffin: 178).

18. *Confessions* 8.10.22 (Simonetti 3:92; Pine-Coffin: 173).

19. *On the Trinity* 15.31; Robert Louis Wilken, "*Spiritus sanctus secundum scripturas sanctas*: Exegetical Considerations of Augustine on the Holy Spirit" *Augustinian Studies* 31 (2000): 12–13.

such humility and with such ardent deference to the exegesis of the Scriptures that his doctrine is still celebrated as an axis of ecumenicity and a universal Christian confession: that the Holy Spirit is God, the one who is himself holy and therefore bestows holiness on others.[20] The Holy Spirit is the one who drives holiness, making holy what was once unholy, making sacred what was counted unsacred; the Holy Spirit is the transformative power of God.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the Fourth Century

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit emerged through the first four centuries of Christianity. From the first, he was both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.[21] The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son was rarely engaged, but it endured nevertheless as a tacit presupposition to the liturgy of baptism and the doxologies of Paul's letters. After Nicea, the applicability of the *homoousion* to the Holy Spirit came into question and the particularities of the Spirit's relationship to the Father and the Son were explored.

Justin Martyr considered the Spirit essential to the knowledge of God and the illumination of the human mind. Justin had pursued various schools of thought before settling on Platonism, which he fully expected to render an intelligible vision of God.[22] In the course of a Socratic dialogue with a Jewish elder named Trypho, Justin is questioned about the human capacity for knowledge of God that he had previously assumed was available to all: "And is there then in our minds a power such as this and so great? Will the human intellect ever see God unless it is furnished with the Holy Spirit?"[23] Thereafter, Justin associates the knowledge of God with spiritual illumination.[24] In a later

20. See, for example, the proceedings of the ecumenical dialogue between the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which were held from 1979 to 1992. The representative of WARC, Lukas Vischer, delivered an address on Basil at the First Official Theological Consultation at Leuenberg in 1988 that built upon the ecumenical appeal of Basil's theology of the Spirit: Lukas Vischer, "The Holy Spirit—Source of Sanctification, Reflections on Basil the Great's Treatise on the Holy Spirit," in *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol 2, ed. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993), 87–106.

21. "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Romans 8:9.

22. *Dialogue with Trypho* 2–3.

23. *Dialogue with Trypho* 4.1 (Marcovich: 76). Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 34.

24. "[Trypho speaking] . . . knowing that daily some [of you] are becoming disciples in the name of Christ, and quitting the path of error; who are also receiving gifts, each as he is worthy, illumined [φωτιζόμενοι] through the name of this Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of

work, Justin describes Christian baptism. After initiates are convinced of the truth of the teachings,

> they then receive washing in water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit . . . and this washing is called illumination [φωτισμός], as those who learn these things are illumined [φωτιζομένων] in the mind. And he who is illuminated is washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold all the things about Jesus.[25]

Justin and the Apologists at times make indiscriminate references to the preincarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit, but in general, they codify two doctrines for pneumatology: first, that the prophets spoke by the Holy Spirit, and second, that the Spirit illumines the believer at baptism.[26]

Irenaeus of Lyons insisted that the Spirit's inspiration of the prophets was a central facet of the tradition of faith handed down in the Christian church.[27] In the act of creation, Irenaeus associates the Spirit with the Wisdom of God who was present and active in the cosmogony.[28] The Word and the Spirit worked equally as God's instruments in the creation of the world. In the creation of the first man, Irenaeus compares the Word and Spirit to two hands of God working out the same purpose: "Now the human being is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God and molded by his hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also he said, *let us make the human being* [Gen. 1:26]."[29] Irenaeus also explored the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit under the metaphor of divine unction, using the formula, "The Father anointed, the Son was anointed, the Spirit was the unction."[30] So for

counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God." *Dialogue with Trypho* 39.2 (Marcovich: 134–35).

25. 1 *Apol*. 61.9–12, 34–39 (Marcovich: 118–19; Barnard: 66–67).

26. Swete, *Spirit*, 86–87.

27. *Against Heresies* 1.10.1.

28. "That the Word was always with the Father has been shown at length; that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was with him before all creation is taught by Solomon [cf. Prov. 3:19, 8:22]. . . . There is, therefore, one God, who made and constructed all things by his Word and Wisdom [Εἷς οὖν ὁ Θεός, ὁ Λόγῳ καὶ Σοφίᾳ ποιήσας καὶ ἁρμόσας τὰ πάντα]." *Against Heresies* 4.20.3–4 (SC 4:632–35; Swete, *Spirit*, 87).

29. "῾Ανθρωπος γὰρ κρᾶσις ψυχῆς καὶ σαρκὸς τῆς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ μεμορφωμένης καὶ διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ πεπλασμένης, τουτέστιν Υἱοῦ καὶ Πνεύματος, οἷς καὶ εἶπε· Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον." *Against Heresies* 4.pref.4.62–65 (SC 4:391). Cf. 4.20.1.

Irenaeus, the single word "Christ" implies the activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this representation of the Son and the Spirit, as well as in the image of the two hands of God, Irenaeus presented a divine coequality between the Son and the Spirit with cooperation of activity among the three Persons of the Trinity. In the redemption and recapitulation of the fallen creation, Irenaeus emphasized the power of the incarnation, the *salus carnis* located in Jesus Christ,[31] but did not exclude the Spirit. His illustration of the Son and the Spirit as the hands of God left room to view them as subsidiary demiurgic instruments, and some who followed Irenaeus would take him to mean just that. In the analogy of the unction, Irenaeus accomplished a remarkable Trinitarian model that proved ahead of his times.[32]

In the third century, Origen made the greatest impact on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Out of concern to retain the philosophical principle of the first cause, Origen declares the Son and Spirit logically posterior to the Father and suggested that the Spirit came to be out of the Father through the Son: "We therefore, as the more pious and truer course, admit that all things came to be through the Logos and that the Holy Spirit is the most honored and the first in order of all that was made (γεγενημένων) by the Father through Christ."[33] In this way, Origen preserves the belief that the Father alone was unbegotten (ἀγέννητον), and protects the first principle by illustrating a view of the Son and the Spirit whereby the Son alone is begotten and the Spirit owes its existence to the Son.[34] This assertion must be counterbalanced by other places where Origen

30. "Καὶ ἔχρισε μὲν ὁ Πατήρ, ἐχρίσθη δὲ ὁ Υἱὸς ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι, ὅ ἐστιν ἡ χρῖσις." *Against Heresies* 3.18.3 (SC 3:351).

31. Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. M. Westerhoff, ed. A. Louth (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 57–60.

32. This metaphor is recapitulated in Basil, *Spir.* 12.28.

33. *Commentary on John* 2.10.75 (SC 120:254–56). Origen is less certain in *On First Principles*: "In regard to [the Holy Spirit] it is not yet clearly known whether he is to be thought of as created or uncreated [γενητός ἢ ἀγέντος], or as being himself also a Son of God or not." *First Principles* 1.pref.4 (GCS: 11n3–5; Butterworth: 3–4). Origen clearly did not mean this logical priority to suggest the type of temporal priority later represented by Arius and Eunomius. See *On First Principles* 4.4.1.

34. Origen uses Justin's terminology of the Son being a "second God." *Against Celsus* 5.39, 6.61; cf. 7.57. Nevertheless, it is somewhat anachronistic to call Origen a subordinationist, as Mark Edwards argues, noting "that the majority of Christian writers in the first three centuries taught a subordinationism more extreme than that of Origen." Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 70. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, held the Spirit in third place "after the second essence," the Son who is the Creator (*Preparation for the Gospel* 7.15.6) and argued that the Spirit is not to be called "God": "But the Spirit the Paraclete is neither God nor Son, since he has not received his origin from the Father in the same way as the Son has, and is one of the things which have come into existence

implies an ultimate unity to the divine Trinity, as in the following: "Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, for there is but one fount of deity, who upholds the universe by his word and reason, and sanctifies *by the spirit of his mouth* all that is worthy of sanctification, as it is written in the Psalm, *By the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all their power by the spirit of his mouth* [Ps. 33:6]."[35] Also from Origen comes the insight that the Persons of the Trinity are eternally related to one another, as is particularly clear with the interrelativity of the Father and the Son, and his doctrine of eternal generation that derives out of it.[36] Furthermore, it must be noted that Origen appears to declaim the terms "creature" or "product" for the Holy Spirit, and makes it clear that the Spirit knows God eternally and without mediation (i.e., as a person might know himself).[37] Nonetheless, those who wished to claim that the Spirit was a part of the created order could draw support from the writings of Origen by quoting selectively and misunderstanding his view of the Trinity, so arguments about Origen's view of the Spirit filled the patristic era.

Origen limited the scope of the work of the Holy Spirit. He believed that while the Father and the Son both work in the world at large, the Holy Spirit is provided for the sanctification of Christians only: "The working of the power of God the Father and God the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saints alone."[38] In a twist of irony, Origen was concerned that his readers would think he was promoting the Spirit to a position over and above the Father and the Son; it was less seemly to him that a divine hypostasis would interact with the world at large than limit its intercourse to the saints. By Basil's time the Spirit's limited scope had become an argument for its lower nature, supplementing the view that the Holy Spirit is no more than the greatest among a class of ministering spirits sent to the community of faith to serve the will of the Son.

through the Son." *Ecclesiastical Theology* 6.164. Cf. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 740.

35. *On First Principles* 1.3.7 (GCS: 60.1–5; Butterworth: 37). That Origen claimed equal honor was due to all three can also be found. Origen, *Comm. John* 13.25. All quotations from *On First Principles* that pertain to the Trinity and are not found in the Greek (*Philocalia*), must be taken with a grain of salt since Rufinus openly notes that he altered Origen's Trinitarian passages to fit his view of orthodoxy as he translated it into Latin. *Preface of Rufinus* 3 (Butterworth: lxiii).

36. Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 63–92.

37. *On First Principles* 1.3.4.

38. *On First Principles* 1.3.7 (GCS: 59.4–6; Butterworth, 36–37).

At the beginning of the fourth century, open theological speculation and exegesis gave way to the bitter polemics of the Arian disputes. Confession and catechism in general terms turned into careful, technical argumentation. Arius had been concerned to oppose the modalist theology of his fellow Libyan, Sabellius.[39] He was also cautious against suggesting any partition or dimunition of the essence of God by emanation into subsidiary divinities. With these concerns in place, he settled on the idea that the second and third divine Persons, although present in the baptismal formula and adored and worshiped together according to Scripture, were in fact different in essence. According to Athanasius, Arius stated explicitly in his writings that "the essences of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate in nature, alien, and diverse, and incapable of participating in each other; and, to quote his own words, 'they are altogether and infinitely dissimilar [ἀνόμοιοι] in essence as well as in glory.'"[40]

The center of the debate surrounding the Council at Nicea was the *homoousion* between the Son and the Father. The Spirit received only slight attention. It was not until the years between 340 and 360 AD that the Spirit became a doctrinal issue in the creeds and confessions of the post-Nicene disputes. One characteristic creed is the second creed of the Dedication Council of Antioch in 341. This creed was claimed, with some merit,[41] to be derived from the confession of Lucian of Antioch, the last great martyr of Christianity under official persecution before the Edict of Milan. Consider the third article:

> And in the Holy Spirit, given to believers for encouragement (*paraklesin*) and sanctification and perfection, just as our Lord Jesus Christ ordered his disciples: "Go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" [Matt. 28:19]—that is, of a Father who is truly Father, a Son who truly is Son, a Holy Spirit who truly is Holy Spirit. These names are not assigned casually or idly, but designate quite precisely the particular subsistence (*hupostasis*), the rank and the glory of each of those named, so as to make them three in respect of subsistence, but one in concord.[42]

39. Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2002), 174.

40. *Oration against Arians* 1.6 (PG 26, 24B; Swete: 165).

41. Williams, *Arius*, 163–64.

42. The creed survives under Athanasius's record in *On the Synods* 23. The critical Greek edition is found in Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* 2.1:249. It is translated by Rowan Williams, *Arius*, 269–70.

The antimodalist tenor is clear in the repetition of "truly" before each Person and the defense of the difference of names. What is also important is the limitation of the scope of work for the Spirit. Note that the Spirit is given not to the world or to all nations but to the "believers for encouragement and sanctification and perfection." This emphasis on sanctification is an innovation to the standard content of creeds and confessions of the early fourth century (or prior). Rowan Williams claims it represents

> an unusual expansion of the creedal affirmation about the Spirit, and likely therefore to be original to Lucian's circle; the mention of *paraklesis* anchors it in the thought of the fourth gospel, and the stress on the Spirit's work of sanctification (rather than the more usual references to the inspiration of the prophets and others) is unique to this text.[43]

The creed fails to exclude the possibility that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ranked in order with regard to essence, or that the Spirit was created by the Father or the Son. Basil would face these claims in the more ardent arguments of Eunomius twenty years later. Many creeds in the period between 340 and 360 held similar emphases, also including anathemas against any who held that there were three gods.[44]

The history of the deployment of the Second Dedication Creed of Antioch is worth rehearsing to set the stage for Basil's contribution. As noted, when the creed was employed at Antioch in 341, the claim was made that it derived from the confession of Lucian the Martyr.[45] The only known disciple of Lucian was Arius.[46] Scholars disagree on the motives behind this creed, but I take it to be a *ressourcement* of the teachings of an honored figure deployed to curtail the efforts of the Pro-Nicenes, to limit the *homoousion*, and to refrain from totally excluding the Arian theologies.[47] Constantius was present at the council, and there can be little doubt that it was seen as an opportunity for reconciliation

43. Ibid., 269n11.

44. For example, anathema four of *The Macrostich* (343/344).

45. Sozomen, *Church History* 3.5.9.

46. "In the whole range of Greek Patristic literature, only one person actually describes himself as a disciple of Lucian, and that person is Arius." Hanson, *Search*, 15. The reference is found in Arius's letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, in which Arius describes Eusebius as "truly a fellow Lucianist," "συλλουκιανιστὰ ἀληθῶς." (Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* 3.1: *Urkunde* 1.5).

47. On the Arian controversy and the position of this creed, see: John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 77–104; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 118–21; Hanson, *Search*, 284–91.

between the parties so divided after Nicaea—an attempt at raising a large tent for imperial Christianity that could include divergent views. Although a strict adherent to Arian theology would bluster at some of the terminology, it does not exclude Arian belief.[48] Many groups made appeal to this creed in the course of the Trinitarian controversy. Originally deployed by its Homoian adherents such as Akakius, who stood in the tradition of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea, it was taken up again by the Homoiousion advocates surrounding Basil of Ancyra in 358 and a few councils that followed.[49] Hilary of Poitiers found nothing offensive in the creed, demonstrating its ability to appease the Pro-Nicene movement in some form.[50] Eustathius of Sebaste affirmed this creed when he appealed for his own orthodoxy in the early 360s before Liberius in Rome, even as he was moving toward full-fledged Pneumatomachianism.[51] The widespread appeal and resonant authority of this creed make it the only possible historical alternative to Nicea; but a creed like this one, which could be confessed by Pro- and Anti-Nicenes alike (and everything in between) only pressed upon Basil and the other Cappadocians the necessity for more definition.

Athanasius of Alexandria engaged with opponents who were happy to defend the full divinity of the Son, but set themselves in opposition to the Spirit, "saying that [the Spirit] is not only a creature [κτίσμα], but actually one of the ministering spirits [λειτουργικῶν πνευματῶν], and differs from the angels only in degree."[52] In 359, he wrote a letter to a bishop named Serapion who had met with Christian leaders assenting to the divinity of the Son but refusing the divinity of the Spirit. Their exegesis of Amos 4:13 was based on a mistranslation of the Hebrew.[53] Originally a passage about the power of God over creation, and totally benign to Trinitarian controversy, the Septuagint unfortunately rendered it "a Trinitarian formula which included a created Holy Spirit."[54] Those who saw the Spirit as a subsidiary divinity leaned on this verse, among others, as evidence that the Spirit was something different from God. Athanasius

48. Williams, *Arius*, 163–64; Hanson, *Search*, 287–88.

49. Hanson, *Search*, 350–51.

50. Hilary, *On the Synods* 29–32.

51. Hanson, *Search*, 763–64.

52. *Letters to Serapion on the Spirit* 1.1 (PG 26, 532A; Shapland: 59–60).

53. Hanson, *Search*, 749. "Διότι ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στερεῶν βροντὴν καὶ κτίζων πνεῦμα καὶ ἀπαγγέλλων εἰς ἀνθρώπους τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ." Amos 4:13, LXX.

54. Hanson, *Search*, 750. The other primary proof-text for Athanasius's opponents was 1 Tim 5:21, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality." Attempting a Trinitarian reading, they associated the Holy Spirit with the elect angels.

did not take recourse to the original Hebrew, but accused his opponents on exegetical grounds all the same by claiming that they used tropes to derive a desired meaning from the Septuagint in the face its plain sense. He called his opponents "Tropici [τροπικοὶ]."[55] In the course of his argument with these Tropici, whom he also coined Pneumatomachians, Athanasius establishes three important points. First, it is nonsense to suggest that the Spirit is created and added on to the dyad of the Father and the Son; if the Son is not created, then neither is the Spirit, for they share in a common nature. The Spirit resides on the Creator side of the Creator-creature divide; he does not receive from God, but renders benefits to those who receive from God. Second, Jesus' command to baptize with the Trinitarian formula leaves no question as to the status of the Holy Spirit as God. Third, there is a difference between the procession of the Spirit and the mission of the Spirit; the Spirit's work after the ascension of Jesus is not the origin of the Spirit's existence, but a particular mission, just as the incarnation was not the origin of the existence of the Son, but a particular mission of the Son. Athanasius concluded that the Trinity, if it be a fact in the divine life, must be an eternal fact; and it cannot be an eternal fact if the Spirit is a creature, because this would mean adding a later Person to the eternal Trinity. This logic could not stand, and so he concluded: "As the Trinity ever was, such it is now; and as it is now, such it ever was."[56]

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was still, after Athanasius, open to a number of questions, even for those who respected his opinion. How is the Spirit related to the Father and the Son with regard to essence? How did the Spirit come into existence? Is the Spirit a minister of the will of the Father and the Son, a ministering spirit, or is the Spirit's work equal to and equated with the work of the Father and the Son? Does the Spirit suffer limitations of scope in its work, or is the Spirit omnipresent and omnipotent? Is sanctification, or perfection, a part of the act of creation? These were all inherited questions when Basil of Caesarea entered into his opening debates with Eunomius.

Basil and Eunomius on the Holy Spirit

Eunomius was appointed bishop of Cyzicus shortly after the council at Constantinople in 360 as the chief voice of the Anti-Nicene position.[57] Holding

55. *Letters to Serapion* 1:17 (PG 26, 572B).

56. "Ὡς γὰρ ἦν, οὕτως ἐστὶ καὶ νῦν· και ὡς νῦν ἐστιν, οὕτως ἀεὶ ἦν." *Letters to Serapion* 3.7 (PG 26, 636C; Swete: 218).

57. His episcopacy was brief and controversial due as much to his inaugural sermon against the perpetual virginity of Mary as to his Anti-Nicene theology. Hanson, *Search*, 611–17; Richard Paul

to a subordinationist theology, Eunomius professed that the Logos was a lesser divine than the Unbegotten God himself. Eunomius confessed the supreme God to be

> the one and only true God, unbegotten [ἀγέννητον], without beginning, incomparable, superior to all cause, himself the cause of the existence of all existing things, but not accomplishing the creation of those things by an association with any other . . . being, in accordance with his preeminence, incomparable in essence, power, and authority, he begot and created before all things as Only-Begotten God our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made, the image and seal of his own power and action. This Only-Begotten God is not to be compared either with the one who begot him or with the Holy Spirit who was made through him, for he is less than the one in being a "thing made" [ποίημα], and greater than the other in being a maker [ποιητής].[58]

According to his logic, there could be only one supreme being, and the Son and the Spirit could not be God in the same way that God is God, although he was comfortable referring to Jesus Christ as "Only-Begotten God." His doctrine of the Holy Spirit is an extension of his doctrine of the Son.[59] If the Son is different in kind from the Father, of a different essence and a lesser form of divinity, why should anyone be ashamed to say that the Spirit holds the third place?[60]

Since differences between Basil and Eunomius range the topics of this project, I will not attempt to summarize the entire debate here, but a word about the differing methodologies of the two men does set the tone for the remainder of their theological contest. We will benefit in this section from a brief assessment of Eunomius's doctrine of the Spirit. As will be clear, Basil turned his attention to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in response to the arguments of Eunomius, and to his claim that the character of the essence of God is available to human rational capacity.

Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 229–231.

58. *Apology* 26 (Vaggione: 68–71).

59. Eunomian theology is outlined by the following: Michel Barnes, "The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language" in *Arianism after Arius*, ed. M. Barnes and D. Williams (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 217–36, and Michel Barnes, *The Power of God:* Δύναμις *in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), chapter 5; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, chapter 5; Behr, *Nicene*, 267–82; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 144–49.

60. *Apology* 25.

Heresiologists' efforts to pin Eunomius down as a philosopher in bishop's clothing no longer have any purchase in the annals of history. Eunomius and Basil were surely "equally concerned to offer a reasoned faith as a way of salvation."[61] Although the great majority of his surviving writings concern Christology, Eunomius did not deny the existence of the Holy Spirit or the importance of its activity. In his theology, the Spirit acts as an instructor for holiness. His opening confessional statement in *The Apology* says of the Spirit: "And in one holy Spirit, the Counselor, in whom is given to each of the saints an apportionment of every grace according to measure for the common good."[62] The Spirit distributes a measure of holiness, a gift of grace, to each of the saints for the sake of the community. Based on John 4:24,[63] Eunomius argues that it is nonsense for God who is worshiped and the Spirit *in* whom he is worshiped to be one and the same.[64] The Spirit is not worshiped as God, but rather,

> is honored in third place as the first and greatest work of all, the only such "thing made" [ποίημα] of the Only-Begotten, lacking indeed godhead [θεότητος] and the power of creation, but filled with the power of sanctification and instruction [ἁγιαστικῆς δὲ καὶ διδασκαλικῆς].[65]

The Spirit is a creation of God and serves the will of God accomplishing certain ends in the history of salvation, but lacking in Godhead and creative power.

Eunomius is faithful to his mentor Aetius in claiming that names refer to the essences of things.[66] Eunomius claimed that names and essences are

61. Maurice Wiles, "Eunomius: Hair-Splitting Dialectitian or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation?" in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 169. Eunomius's final *Confession* of 383 includes the claim that even thoughts and concepts (νοημάτων) will be subject to the final judgment and may be cause for eternal damnation stressing "the crucial importance of correct knowledge or doctrine for the Christian's future salvation." Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 521–22. Cf. Eunomius, *Confession of Faith* 5 (Vaggione: 158).

62. *Apology* 5.5–7 (Vaggione: 38). The term παράκλητον is from John. The remainder of the sentence is a conflation of 1 Corinthians 12:7, Romans 12:3, and perhaps Ephesians 4:7. The word Eunomius selects to describe the measure of grace given to a saint by the Spirit is διανομή, which is not a New Testament word.

63. "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

64. *Apology* 25.13–16 (Vaggione: 66–68).

65. *Apology* 25.23–26 (Vaggione: 68–69).

66. Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 266–277.

related, and if the names are different then the essences are different as well.[67] Reason seems to be on Eunomius's side when he insists that words must be tied to the essence of their referents. For him, if one confesses that God is without generation, this must refer to the essence of God or else it is a meaningless statement. Either language means something or Christian doctrine means nothing at all.[68] In the case of God, however, many theologians tend to be more reserved about the purchase language can hold in apprehending the essence. Eunomius made an assertion that would resound through history as the height of theological arrogance:

> God does not know anything more about his own essence than we do, nor is that essence better known to him and less to us; rather whatever we ourselves know about it is exactly what he knows, and, conversely, that which he knows is what you will find without variation in us.[69]

It is the claim to know the essence of God that Basil found most egregiously in error, and it is in reaction to just this claim that Basil forges his arguments for the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of his theological career, Basil was reluctantly willing to engage the debates over the essence of God. In a letter, before *Against Eunomius*, Basil wrote,

> As for me, if I may speak of my own opinion, I accept the terminology "like according to essence [ὅμοιον κατ' οὐσιαν]" only if it has the qualification "without variation [ἀπαραλλάκτως]" appended to it so that it bears the same meaning as "of the same substance [ὁμοουσίῳ]"—according to the sound conception of the term "of the same substance [ὁμοουσίου]." Those at Nicaea thought just the same, professing the Only-Begotten to be "light from light" and "true God from true God" and the like, and thereby setting up the term "same substance" as a necessary conclusion.[70]

67. *Apology* 18.13–14 (Vaggione: 56).

68. Wiles, "Eunomius," 164.

69. Socrates, *Church History* 4.7.13–14. Behr, *Nicene*, 271. Some doubt continues to surround this statement by virtue of its hearsay quotation, but it is consistent with the general theological perspective of Aetius and Eunomius. Wiles, "Eunomius," 161; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 253, and *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 167–70.

70. *Ep.* 9.3.1–7 (Courtonne 1:39).

Basil was leaning clearly toward *homoousion* at this stage (c. 361), thinking that it is less likely to cause confusion than any other term, but his association with it was not hard and fast. In a letter to Apollinarius, Basil wrote,

> So then if anyone should speak of the essence of the Father as a noetic light, eternal and unbegotten, then he should speak also of the essence of the Only-Begotten as a noetic light, eternal and unbegotten. It seems to me that the phrase *invariably similar* [ἀπαραλλάκτως ὁμοίου] fits better for such a meaning than *consubstantial* [ὁμοουσίου].[71]

It is this letter, and this very turn of phrase, that provides the basis for claiming that Basil was openly associated with the *homoiousion* group for a season. Basil seems to have been entering the field, assessing the claims of various groups affiliating themselves around terminologies of divine essence, and searching for his own affiliation.

A critical shift came when Basil read the *Apology* of Eunomius and decided to deconstruct it line by line, after the fashion of Origen's *Against Celsus*.[72] He begins the treatise with an attack on the impiety of Eunomius for claiming to know the essence of God. When he offers his rejoinder to Eunomius, he abandons this effort. The essence of God is not knowable, so why is it being debated?

> Therefore, putting aside this meddlesome curiosity about the essence [οὐσίαν] since it is unattainable, we ought to attend to the simple advice of the apostle when he says: *One must first believe that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him* [Heb. 11:6]. For it is not the investigation of *what* he is but rather the confession *that* he is that provides salvation for us.[73]

The debate over essence is a meddlesome curiosity over knowledge that is unattainable. It comes to Basil's mind in this early season that the schismatic divisions of the church, which he found embarrassingly outstripped any divisions between schools of thought in hard sciences or philosophy, may very well be the divine consequence for the impiety of claiming to know God's

71. *Ep.* 361.27–31 (Courtonne 3:221).

72. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 66.

73. *Eun.* 1.14.40–48 (SC 1:222–24).

essence.[74] The effrontery of Eunomius is unmatched in Basil's view. He seems to claim to know more of God than the authors of Scripture claim. Basil saw Eunomius's presentation as naïve realism and arrogant overreaching of human capacities. The grammar of theology used by Eunomius resounded with a diabolical arrogance to Basil.[75] To claim such intimate knowledge of the essence of God, in Basil's opinion, was for Eunomius to put himself above Isaiah, David, and Paul.[76] To claim such intimate knowledge of the essence was consonant with claiming to know the name of God; knowledge that was beyond even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[77]

From this point onward, Basil does not wish to associate with claims to know the character of the essence of God. He makes two definitive shifts. First, he seeks to regain an air of reverence in theological discourse, recognizing that knowledge of God is an ever-dependent posture, contingent upon God's divine self-disclosure. Second, he stretches the hand of communion to all who confess Nicea and refrain from calling the Spirit a creation (κτίσμα), suggesting that in this confession the minimum of Christian doctrine is met. In both of these moves, there is a clear turn toward the importance of the Holy Spirit for continuing Trinitarian discourse.

Basil's epistemological turn against Eunomius is explored by Ayres and Radde-Gallwitz.[78] It finds its clearest expression in a series of letters to Amphilochius roughly contemporaneous with the treatise *On the Holy Spirit*.[79] Basil makes the claim that knowledge of God is "epinoetic."[80] We know God by virtue of revealed activities and our perception of them. He writes, "The primary function of our mind is to know one God, but to know him so far as the infinitely great can be known by the very small."[81] Basil could then

74. *On the Judgment of God* 2 (PG 31, 653C–656C).

75. *Eun.* 1.3.54–60; cf. 2.34. At *Eun.* 2.19.58–60, Basil takes umbrage at the phrase "we allot him [αὐτῷ νέμομεν] as much superiority as the maker necessarily has over the things he himself has made" (*Apol.* 15.10–11; Vaggione: 52), as though Eunomius had the authority to "allot" power or authority to the Only-Begotten.

76. *Eun.* 1.12.11–29.

77. *Eun.* 1.13.25–44.

78. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–98; Radde-Gallwitz, *Simplicity*, 122–54. See also Philip Rousseau's discussion of language and reality in the Eunomian debate: Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 108–16.

79. *Epp.* 231–236, written c. 374–375.

80. On Basil's use of ἐπινοία and the importance of the term throughout the Eunomian controversy see: Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–98; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 241–46; Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 375–77; and Radde-Gallwitz, *Simplicity*, 143–54.

81. *Ep.* 233.2.4–7 (Courtonne 3:40).

"confess that I know what is knowable of God, and that I know what it is that is beyond my comprehension."[82] Still seemingly influenced by his opinion of the claims of Eunomius, a decade later Basil charged Amphilochius to examine the truth "not with mischievous exactness but with reverence."[83] The believer stands in a receptive posture before knowledge of God. This is not a foundation for claiming to know God's essence, a blasphemous claim in Basil's view,[84] but standing in divine light and perceiving what God reveals through his activities. Divine disclosure through the activities is not so much information as invitation, Basil argued. The one who has confessed that God exists may begin to grow in faith and begin a life of worship:

> But in our belief about God, first comes the idea that God is. This we gather from his works. For, as we perceive his wisdom, his goodness, and all his invisible things from the creation of the world, so we know him. So, too, we accept him as our Lord. For since God is the Creator of the whole world, and we are a part of the world, God is our Creator. This knowledge is followed by faith, and this faith by worship.[85]

In Basil's view, the theologian must abandon any posture in relation to God other than worship. There is no objective third position from which the theologian may observe the relationship between God and human. The human being can only speak of God from within that relationship. God is Creator, and the theologian is part of creation.

The Spirit is needed here. In Basil's view of theological epistemology, the knower is separated from what is known. Basil recognizes an epistemological gap, a distance between what is known of God and what can be said of God in human language. The following passage is famous for its reference to the lack of clarity Nicea rendered for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but it actually says something else:

> For the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit was laid down cursorily [at Nicea], not being considered worthy of being completely worked out because of the fact that no one had yet stirred up this question,

82. *Ep.* 235.2.13–15 (Courtonne 3:45).

83. *Ep.* 233.2.1–2 (Courtonne 3:40); cf. *Eun.* 1.14.

84. "Εἰ τὴν οὐσίαν λέγεις εἰδέναι, αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐπίστασαι," "If you say that you know [God's] essence, you are not acquainted with him." *Ep.* 234.2.2–3 (Courtonne 3:43).

85. *Ep.* 235.1.9–17 (Courtonne 3:44).

> but the understanding concerning him [i.e., the Spirit] was held unassailable in the minds of the faithful.[86]

Basil does not say that the fathers at Nicea had no understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit, but that they were not yet pressed into expressing it in words.[87] They knew it in unspoken ways in the unassailable dimension of their souls. Only when pressed by circumstances would they attempt to breach the gap between what is known and what is said. Basil builds a theological epistemology that leaves room for a tacit knowledge of God, knowledge of God that is not yet expressed in words. Basil considers knowledge of God to be much greater than simply what can be expressed about God. The careful and rational expression of this knowledge comes later, and, it seems, is only necessary because of the challenges of heresy.

Basil writes that the human mind is by nature dynamic. It is always in motion and never at rest. At any given time the mind either pursues vice, pursues neutral technical knowledge, or pursues divine knowledge:

> But if it inclines toward the more divine part, and receives the graces of the Spirit, then it becomes capable of apprehending divine things, so far as the measure of its nature allows. . . . The mind that is intermixed with the Godhead of the Spirit is at once capable of viewing great objects; it beholds the divine beauty, though only so far as grace imparts and its nature receives.[88]

Basil reiterates the power of the Spirit to increase the spiritual senses of the Christian and make knowledge of God possible. The power of the Spirit to illumine is effective in the believer only up to the natural limitations of the human mind, but without the activity of the Spirit no knowledge of God would be possible.

86. *Ep.* 125.3.3–7 (Courtonne 2:33).

87. Note that this is different from Gregory of Nazianzus's later account. In *Oration* 31.26–27, Gregory claims that the knowledge of the Holy Spirit was too much for Christians to bear, and so God lovingly bestowed it upon the church in a gradual disclosure after the Father and the Son had been so disclosed. Basil claims, in contrast, that the fathers at Nicea knew the divinity of the Holy Spirit but did not have the words to explain it, or the need to defend the doctrine from heresy.

88. *Ep.* 233.1.16–19, 32–36 (Courtonne 3:39–40). Cf. "With a small turning of the eye, we are either facing the sun or facing the shadow of our own body. Thus one who looks upward easily finds illumination, but for one who turns toward the shadow darkening is inevitable." *Homily That God Is Not the Author of Evil* 8 (PG 31, 348A; Harrison: 76).

The second piece of evidence for Basil's turn to the Spirit is his departure from the contemporary Trinitarian dispute. Basil abandons the efforts of others at bringing one political group to victory by virtue of a theory of the divine essence. His view on this point is recorded in his well-known *Epistle* 125, in which he demands a confession of the Nicene Creed and a declaration that the Holy Spirit is not a creature (κτίσμα) for participation in the community of faith.[89] In a shorter letter to some unknown presbyters in Tarsus, the reason behind Basil's turn to the Spirit is perhaps made clearer. Basil writes with concern that the church is so tried by its present controversies that it is like an antique garment being pulled at all sides; the slightest tug might reduce it to shreds. In light of this state, Basil suggests that only the Nicene Creed and a confession that the Spirit is not a creation be required.

> Let us then seek nothing more, but merely propose the faith of Nicea to those brothers wishing to join us; and if they agree to this, let us also require of them that the Spirit not be called a creature [κτίσμα], and that those saying this do not retain fellowship with them. Beyond this I do not think anything further is required of them from us. I am convinced that in our prolonged association together over time and shared experience free of strife, even if some fuller understanding is needed to clarify things, the Lord who *works all things for good for those who love him* [Rom. 8:28] will give it.[90]

Yes, Basil surmised that a confession of the noncreaturely status of the Spirit is necessary for a full confession of Christian faith, above and beyond fidelity to Nicea. The other side of the coin, however, is that Basil is not as interested in outright victory of a particular party as he is in the unity of the church and the possibility that in hanging together the Lord would fill out this knowledge for the church over time.

The following chapters explore Basil's notion that the Spirit is necessary to the work of bringing the believer into knowledge of the revelation of God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son; therefore the Spirit is necessary for salvation. The reader is referred to the work of Lewis Ayres and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz for the latest explorations of the nuances, possible sources, and innovative capacities of Basil's theological epistemology.[91] Here the question is

89. This "epistle" is actually a formulary of agreement between the Pro-Nicenes, represented by Basil, and Eustathius of Sebaste. Hermann Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1956), 35–43.

90. *Ep.* 113.32–41 (Courtonne 2:17). Written c. 372.

raised, how did Basil's program of knowledge of God play into his claims about the divinity of the Holy Spirit? In what way was Basil's proposition that the Spirit is divine a result of his convictions about human knowing? Basil saw in Eunomius a marked impiety of method based on what amounted to a sort of naïve epistemological realism. Basil was offended by a theological approach that attempted to measure the relationship between God and God's creation as if from the outside. If God illumines, we stand in divine light. If God is Creator, we are creatures. If God is Revealer, we are recipients only of what has been revealed. In Eunomius, we know God's essence and activities and compare the two.[92] In Basil, we know only God's activity, not God's essence; therefore the Son is like the Father in essence so far as we know. It is into this gap that Basil builds a doctrine of the Holy Spirit who illumines. For Basil, Christian certainty is not logic but faith, and faith comes by the Spirit of God.

91. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–98; Radde-Gallwitz, *Simplicity*, 122–54.

92. Jesus Christ is unlike the Father according to essence, but like the Father according to activity: "It is not with respect to essence but with respect to the action (which is what the will is) that the Son preserves his similarity to the Father." Eunomius, *Apology* 24.2–4 (Vaggione: 64). Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 339.

2

In Divine Light—Baptism as Illumination

This chapter establishes Basil's relationship with the tradition of baptism as illumination and demonstrates how he builds upon that tradition. Basil's theology of baptism is in sharp contrast to that of his opponents on both sides, Eunomius and Eustathius. The experience of illumination for the Christian is palpable evidence of divine activity and is therefore revelation upon which theology can be constructed in Basil's view. The illumination of the mind by the Spirit of God becomes the foundation for including the Spirit in the metaphor of light representing the bond between the Son and the Father in the Nicene Creed. Basil's association of the Spirit with divine light provided the framework for one of the most enduring Cappadocian arguments that the metaphor of light extends to the entire Trinity, not just to the Father and the Son. If the Spirit is also the light of God, the Spirit is also God.

Basil hangs his theology of the Trinity from the baptismal command of Jesus at Matthew 28:19.[1] While never explicitly stating that the Holy Spirit is God, Basil makes arguments from baptism that lead his reader inexorably to that conclusion. First, only God is invoked in baptism, and since Jesus ordained baptism under the invocation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all three must be God. Secondly, in accordance with Basil's dictate that God is only known by the divine activities or energies—that is, by the overtures God makes toward humanity—Basil builds on a strong tradition of baptism as illumination to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit illumines the mind of the believer for knowledge of God. Since knowledge of God is only possible when God reveals it, the reader is left to conclude that the power of the Holy Spirit to illumine the mind for knowledge of God is itself a revelation that the Spirit is God. Basil

1. "Er den ganzen Inhalt des Glaubens aus dem Taufbefehl ableitete." Hermann Dörries, "Basilius und das Dogma vom Heiligen Geist" *Lutherische Rundschau* 6 (1956/57): 220.

drew two emphases out of the tradition and theology of the church prior to him: that baptism is the sacrament of the Spirit, and that baptism is illumination. Employing these two ideas, Basil found a way to argue for the divinity of the Holy Spirit without engaging in the typical debates over divine essence of his day, which he considered hopelessly divisive.

It is in baptism that God redeems the believer, in baptism that a person is restored to progress in deification, in baptism that the sinner dies and the holy person is born anew. In baptism, the mind is illumined for knowledge of God and the soul is empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism, for Basil, is uniquely ordained by the command that Jesus Christ gave his disciples at Matthew 28:19: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* From this verse, from the authority of its use in liturgy, and from the subjective experience of baptism itself, Basil aimed to establish and defend a Christian theology of the Trinity balanced between the poles of Sabellian modalism and Anomoian tritheism. In growing measure, Basil came to realize that by defending the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity he could defend Nicaea from both sides:

> I groan in my very soul because I am forced, like those who box against two men, to grant the truth its fitting force by hitting with my arguments and striking down the erroneous statements on both sides. For on the one hand Anomoeus[2] attacks us, and on the other, as it seems, Sabellius.[3]

To defend the Trinity was to stand the middle ground, and Basil could defend the place of the Spirit in the Trinity by appealing to the role of the Spirit in the holy and sacramental rite of baptism. The argument from the liturgy of baptism was not original with Basil, but was employed by him in poignant ways for pneumatology. Basil emphasized the experience of the baptized believer and the intellectual and spiritual transformation in the Christian who is baptized and experiences divine illumination.

2. Basil makes a play on the name Eunomius, replacing it with Ανόμοιος, which means "dissimilar" and is reminiscent of the heretical classification of ἄνομος, "lawless."

3. *Ep.* 210.4.3–7 (Courtonne 2:193; LCL: 202–205). The same complaint can be found in his little-known sermon *Against Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoians* 1 (PG 31, 600B): "Such is the battle against orthodoxy. It is attacked on one side by Sabellius and on the other by those who preach the 'unlike.'"

The Baptismal Command in Eunomius, Eustathius, and Basil

Eunomius of Cyzicus does not formally outline his theory or practice of baptism in any of his extant writings, but his position can be pieced together from excerpts and references. Eunomius did not alter the language of the baptismal command at Matthew 28:19, but worked to educate his parishioners in what he considered to be the accurate meaning of the three names.[4] Basil and Eunomius agreed that the traditional language of baptism was authoritative and should not be altered, but disagreed over what the words meant as recited.[5] Rowan Williams points out that liturgy, even if consistent and shared in common between warring factions, was nevertheless subject to debate over the meaning of the words in the Arian controversies:

> In fact, there is evidence that liturgical practice in general and baptism in particular was appealed to by both sides in the debate. Liturgy, like Scripture, was a common ground for disputation, and, just as biblical phrases in their pre-controversial innocence could be deployed by theologians of totally opposed commitments, so could the formulations of public worship.[6]

The order of baptism was a consistent practice, but its meaning came into constant debate. The one exception is that Eunomius appears to have adhered to single immersion baptism out of concern that the threefold immersion common to the Pro-Nicene churches left the initiate open to the confusion of multiple Gods or an equality of the three Persons.[7] Eunomius did not regard baptism in the name of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" as a statement of equality in rank or a communion of nature in the Trinity. For him, the order was a clear revelation of the essential subordination of the Son to the Father and the Spirit to the Son. The ordering of the divine Persons is to him a clear indication of rank and dignity, of power and divinity, and of essence. The Father is first, the Son second, the Spirit third, and these positions are not meaningless but foundational for understanding their mutual relationship.

4. Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 332–33.

5. Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 389.

6. Rowan Williams, "Baptism and the Arian Controversy," in *Arianism after Arius*, ed. M. Barnes and D. Williams (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 149.

7. Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 332; Williams, *Baptism*, 171–75. This was the practice in the community of the Eunomian historian Philostorgius. Philostorgius, *Church History* 10.4.

In Eunomius, the Father is clearly at the uppermost crest and the Son slightly lesser in divinity. The Spirit is actually a part of the created order, the first and greatest of what has been made by the Father through the Son. Of the Spirit, Eunomius writes,

> He is honored in third place as the first and greatest work of all, the only such "thing made" [ποίημα] of the Only-Begotten, lacking indeed godhead [θεότητος] and the power of creation, but filled with the power of sanctification and instruction.[8]

Eunomius claims that this view of the three Persons is founded in simple logic, and he considers the ranking of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit common knowledge among Christians. He also claims that this theology has strong tradition behind it including the authority of "the teaching of the saints."[9]

> However, if these arguments have sufficed us for what concerns the Only-Begotten, logical order requires us in what remains to say something about the Counselor as well, not following the thoughtless opinions of the multitude, but holding to the teaching of the saints in all things. Since from them we learn that he is third in both dignity and order, we believe that he is third in nature as well, for the dignities of the natures have not been bestowed on each in turn the way political office is among human beings, nor is the order of their creation the reverse of that of their essences. Rather, the order of each conforms harmoniously to its nature, so that the first in order is not second in nature and the first in nature is certainly not allotted second or third place in the order.[10]

The modalism of the Sabellians is targeted in this passage. Eunomius points out that the names of the Persons are not offices held like president, governor, senator, which may be held by different persons who are by nature equal; rather the names of the Persons disclose something different in their actual natures. Eunomius considers the order of existence—first there was the Father, and then the Son was generated, and then the Spirit—universal Christian belief. He deploys this as a self-evident axiom used to bolster his other claims. But where did Eunomius locate this teaching of the saints? Elsewhere Eunomius deploys

8. *Apology* 25.23–26 (Vaggione: 68–69).

9. Ibid., 25.3–4 (Vaggione: 66).

10. Ibid., 25.1–10 (Vaggione: 66–67).

the phrases "the words of the saints" and "the teaching of the Scriptures" to denote Scripture passages, and that is probably what is inferred by the "teaching of the saints."[11] The question of which Scriptures he is referring to is left open to speculation. Eunomius is confident that the baptismal command of Jesus and the tradition of the rite of baptism in the church are sufficient to support the subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father.

Basil attacks Eunomius on this point. He overstates the argument when he suggests that subordination can be found in no Christian thinker prior to Eunomius, but points out that there is a difference between ordination by rank or dignity, which the regular order of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit implies, and the subordination by nature that Eunomius claims.

> Next he says that while it is on the authority of the saints that he has learned that the Holy Spirit is third both in rank and in dignity, it is on his own authority that he has come to believe that the Holy Spirit is third in nature as well. Now who are the saints that taught this? In what treatises have they expressed it? Has there ever been someone so audacious as to introduce innovations about the divine doctrines? After all, if the Spirit is third in dignity and in rank, is there some necessity that he be third in nature as well? Perhaps the word of piety transmits that he is second to the Son in dignity, but by no means have we learned from the holy Scriptures that a third nature is necessary, nor is it possible to infer this as the conclusion of the preceding claims.[12]

There may indeed be a regular ordering of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Scripture and Christian tradition, but this does not necessitate in Basil's view a subordination of natures. It is possible, he claims, for the Persons to be ordered in rank and still share the same common nature of divinity.

> If something is second or third in rank and dignity, it does not always have a different nature. For in the case of angels, one is a prince, another a servant, and nevertheless all are angels by nature: while there is a difference in their dignities, there is communion in nature. Indeed, *star differs from star in glory* [1 Cor. 15:41], but all the stars have a single nature. . . . So also it is clear that the same holds true for

11. Ibid., 12.1–7 (Vaggione: 46–49).

12. *Against Eunomius* 3.1.19–30 (SC 2:144–46; DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz: 185).

> the Holy Spirit, even if he is subordinate in dignity and rank, as they claim.[13]

Basil claims that rank and dignity do not necessarily define nature; the nature can be the same among different ranks and orders, as is seen both with angels and with stars.

Eunomius, according to Basil, has made the claim that the Scriptures themselves bear testimony to the differentiated natures of the three Persons.

> "For we have gathered," says Eunomius, "that he is numbered third after the Father and the Son, seeing that the Lord himself taught this order when he taught the baptism of salvation, saying: *Go, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* [Matt. 28:19]." But that he is cast out into some sort of nature that is third from the Son and the Father is something that we have never learned from anywhere.[14]

This quotation is not found in any extant writing of Eunomius, but Basil quotes it as though he had actually heard Eunomius say it. It could simply be a conjecture that Eunomius bases his theory on Matthew 28:19,[15] but it could also be that Eunomius said as much in person at Constantinople in 360 or another such venue. The two men have read the same verse and taken it in directly opposite directions. The same verse that compels Eunomius to claim that the subordination of the three Persons is laid out by Christ himself compels Basil to argue that the inclusion of all three names in the singular divine rite of baptism is an indication of the community of nature between them.[16] God alone is invoked at baptism. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are invoked, then they are all together God. So Basil concludes,

13. Ibid., 3.2.1–11 (SC 2:150).

14. Ibid., 3.2.11–17 (SC 2:150–52).

15. If so, it is a valid guess. Vaggione is confident in his note on the passage in question that Eunomius uses the phrase "teaching of the saints" to denote the Scriptures and that Basil is "probably right in supposing it to be Matt. 28:19." Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 66 n25b.

16. Cf. *Ep* 210.4.22–31 (Courtonne 2:193–94; LCL: 205): "So he who says the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, though he has said three, he has joined them by the conjunction, showing that a distinct signification underlies each name, because names are significant of things. That things have individual and complete existence no one who has even a little intelligence will question. For of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit the nature is the same, and the Godhead is one [φύσις μέν ἡ αὐτή, καὶ θεότης μία]; but the names are different, presenting to us, as they do, conceptions that are circumscribed and exactly fitting."

> This claim of Eunomius is clearly opposed to what has been handed down about saving baptism: *Go . . . baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. Baptism is the seal of faith, and faith is an assent to divinity.[17]

When one declares faith at baptism, one is declaring that the object of that faith is God. When one is baptized, he declares faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit "in accordance with exactly what the Lord handed down, since it is no creature or servant ranked together with the Father and the Son, but the divinity becomes complete in Trinity."[18] Baptism is the quintessential confession for Basil that all three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are God.

The model for baptism in the early church is the baptism of Jesus recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.[19] Basil shared a common assumption, based on the story of Jesus' baptism and the allusion to it in John 1:32–34, that a Christian should expect to receive the Holy Spirit as a product of this sacrament. As the dove had descended upon Jesus, so the Spirit would descend on the baptized believer.[20] Basil agreed with the widespread Christian notion that the Holy Spirit descends on an initiate in a new and powerful way in the moment of baptism. But controversy sprang up over the issue. Some believed that the Spirit was distributed to believers as a gift resultant of the rite of baptism.[21] The Spirit was in this view a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who worked to perfect a baptized Christian in moral rectitude and instruction, enlightening the mind to new levels of knowledge of God. Basil agreed that the Spirit would perform these functions, but disagreed with the attendant conclusion that the Spirit was a minister, a serving Spirit, and not fully God.

17. *Against Eunomius* 3.5.34–37 (SC 2:164; DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz: 192).

18. "Ὡς τῆς θεότητος ἐν Τριάδι συμπληρουμένης." Ibid., 3.5.34–37 (SC 2:164).

19. Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22.

20. "Speculation about baptism in the third century revolves around its function, universally admitted hitherto, as the medium of the bestowal of the Spirit." J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A & C Black, 1977), 207. Origen elegantly connects the descent of the Spirit over Jesus with the benefits of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. *Homily on Luke* 27.5–6 (FC: 114).

21. Basil answers those who "hold the Spirit in contempt because He is a gift" at *Spir.* 24.57 (SC 17:452–54), but does not give an indication of which Bible verses were used to make this claim. Acts 2:38 refers to the Holy Spirit as a gift (δωρεὰν) that is bestowed at baptism. The critical phrase, "λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πηεύματος" could mean either that the Spirit is a gift, or (assuming a possessive genitive) that the Spirit bestows its gift. Basil would have undoubtedly preferred the latter. In his *Exhortation to Baptism* (PG 31, 425A), Basil quotes Acts 2:38, replacing δωρεὰν with ἐπαγγελίαν. See below.

Eustathius of Sebaste was Basil's most influential Christian mentor outside of the influence of his family.[22] In fact, the women that Basil admired the most and claimed as his educators in the Christian faith—his grandmother Macrina, mother Emmelia, and older sister Macrina[23]—were enthralled by Eustathius's ascetic experiments while Basil was away in Constantinople and Athens as a student.[24] A native Armenian, Eustathius had set up ascetic communities in Sebaste deeply concerned with philanthropy and selfless service and influenced by the Origenist monasticism that had grown out of Alexandria and Caesarea of Palestine. Basil claims that Eustathius had traveled to Alexandria during his course of education and had learned from Arius.[25] Eustathius returned to visit the Origenist monasteries on at least one other occasion when Basil pursued him after quitting Athens.[26] The great disciple of Origen Gregory Thaumaturgus was held in highest regard by Eustathius and considered the model of Christian belief and commitment, and he was not alone. Gregory Thaumaturgus was the icon of Christian culture in Cappadocia.[27] He was the man who had brought Christianity to the region, and his theological affiliation and patronage was Origenist.[28] It appears that Basil's itinerary through the monastic sites retraced the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus. Monasticism in Cappadocia was tied to the Origenist monastic movement of Alexandria

22. (David Emmanuel) Amand de Mendieta, *L'Ascèse Monastique de Saint Basile* (Maredsous: Éditions de Maredsous, 1949), 52–61; Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 73–76, 239–40; Charles Frazee, "Anatolian Asceticism in the Fourth Century: Eustathios of Sebastea and Basil of Caesarea" *Catholic Historical Review* 66 (1981): 20–21.

23. *Epp.* 204.6, 223.2.

24. Frazee, "Asceticism," 20–21.

25. Basil refers to Eustathius's association with Arius at *Epp.* 130.1, 223.5, and 263.3.

26. *Ep.* 223; Frazee, "Asceticism," 21–22.

27. Gregory Thaumaturgus is treated succinctly by Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 34–37; and Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1986), 516–43. See also Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 266–72. For Gregory of Thaumaturgus's own emulation of Origen at his "school" in Caesarea of Palestine: Robert Louis Wilken, "Alexandria: A School for Training in Virtue," in *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Patrick Henry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 15–30.

28. Legend dictates that when he came to the city of Neocaesarea in Cappadocia, where he became bishop, there were only seventeen Christians in the city; when he left there were only seventeen pagans left to be converted. Basil, *Spir.* 29.74; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* (PG 46, 909B, 953D); Raymond Van Dam, *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 73; Fox, *Pagans*, 530; Wilken, *Spirit*, 269–72. The importance of Gregory Thaumaturgus and his hagiography for Basil and the Cappadocians should not be underestimated, nor the enduring influence of Origen that accompanied him.

through Gregory Thaumaturgus, Eustathius, and Basil.[29] The monastic communities established by Eustathius were devout to the point of being labeled extreme. Eustathius was accustomed to wearing a rough animal skin tied with a belt to signify his disregard for wealth and worldly association.[30]

As a young man, Basil clearly admired Eustathius deeply for his earnest and radical monastic lifestyle that challenged the status quo on a number of issues, advocating the radical redistribution of wealth, the virtue of celibacy over marriage (causing some of his followers to leave their spouses), and a protest against the cultural norms of hair and dress for women of the day.[31] This presented Basil with what he considered a genuinely authentic way of life for a Christian in direct contrast to the superficial world of Athens: "Upon hearing of your philosophy I got out of Athens, despising everything in that place."[32] In a later letter, he explains that he traveled to Alexandria after leaving Athens in an effort to follow Eustathius, having "prayed that some mentor might be given to me to introduce me to the teachings of piety."[33] Not being able to reach him, Basil remained in Alexandria and was impressed with the ascesis of the monks in the area.

> I was amazed with them for their self-discipline, amazed by their endurance in suffering, astounded at their vigor in prayer and how they prevailed against sleep, having not been subdued by any natural necessity, ever guarding the high thoughts of their souls free and unencumbered by hunger or thirst, by cold or nakedness, never

29. What I mean by *Origenism* is devotion to the life of Origen as a model for ascetic disciplines, noted by reference to him or his writings. Leaders of monastic movements in Asia Minor traveled to Origen's devoted followers in Egypt and Palestine to find a model. Basil's monasticism is of a primarily Origenist character, although he took monasticism from the private cell into the community and harnessed the spiritual abilities of his monks to address the social ills of his times. William Harmless suggested that Basil's monasticism should not be characterized as Origenist because it stems from the radical community of his sister Macrina and the profound influence of Eustathius of Sebaste; however, Eustathius traveled to Origenist monastic sites out of devotion, and Macrina was profoundly shaped in her practice of Christianity by the traditions of Gregory Thaumaturgus. William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 428–32. The best work on characterizing Basil's monasticism is that of Amand de Mendieta, *Ascèse*, which includes Eustathius among a list of influences that also includes Origen, Pachomius, and the Neoplatonists.

30. Frazee, *Asceticism*, 18.

31. Sozemenus, *Church History* 3.14; Socrates, *Church History* 2.43.

32. "᾽Εγὼ κατέλιπον τὰς ᾽Αθήνας κατὰ φήμην τῆς σῆς φιλοσοφίας ὑπεριδὼν τῶν ἐκεῖ." *Ep.* 1.12–13 (Courtonne 1:3).

33. "Ηὐχόμην δοθῆναι μοι χειραγωγίαν πρὸς τὴν εἰσαγωγὴν τῶν δογμάτων τῆς εὐσεβείας." *Ep.* 223.2.9–10 (Courtonne 3:10).

> turning their thoughts toward the body, never willing to waste any attention on it, but ever going about their work as though in borrowed flesh. They demonstrated what it is to live temporarily in this place and what it is to have a citizenship that is in heaven.[34]

Basil prayed to be worthy of emulating such lives, and then heard that there were "some in my fatherland trying to imitate the example of those men [and] I believed that I had found an aid to my own salvation."[35] Basil could return home and continue to imitate the earnest monasticism of the Origenist monks around Alexandria.[36] Of course, he refers here to the communities established by Eustathius, and it is likely that he heard of them through his sister or mother.[37]

Hermann Dörries is probably right that Basil first seriously considered the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life in his exposure to Eustathius of Sebaste.[38] But, as we have seen, the motivation to learn more of the role of the Holy Spirit was not purely an interest in monasticism. For Basil, this motivation stemmed from the crisis of his failure confronting Aetius and Eunomius at the Council of Constantinople in 360. His interest in monasticism could be as much investigative research into the power of the Holy Spirit as anything else.

Eustathius had a developed sense of the activity of the Spirit sanctifying the community, but never accepted a full divinity of the Spirit. In an exhaustive

34. Ibid., 223.2.23–31 (Courtonne 3:10–11; LCL: 295).

35. Ibid., 223.3.1–3 (Courtonne 3:11; LCL: 295).

36. Basil's affinity with Origenist monasticism is proved indirectly through his admiration for Gregory Thaumaturgus, but also directly in Basil's own tour of monastic sites (c. 357). Upon return, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus gathered in Annisa to, among other things, produce a compendium of Origen's writings, *The Philocalia of Origen*. It is clear that Basil was aware after his tour of the Origenist monasteries—if not before—of the enduring power of Origen's vision of the Christian life, along with the authority and power of his exegesis. The *Philocalia* reads like a handbook, a ready guide to the teachings of Origen that endure for Christians without the controversial and speculative explorations: "The selection filters out some of the more controversial aspects of Origen's doctrine such as the speculations on the pre-existence of souls, and the apparent subordinationism of his Christology. . . . The collation of Origen's texts is far more than a mere compendium. The selection stood, as it were, as a first general manual of theology for use by the clergy, an attempt to standardize doctrinal reflections across a wider range of clerical teachers than those few intellectuals who had hitherto achieved eminence in the schools." John Anthony McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 102–3. See also: George Lewis, *The Philocalia of Origen* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911); Rousseau, *Basil*, 11–14, 82–85.

37. Rousseau, *Basil*, 75.

38. Hermann Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1956), 28.

analysis of the structure of *On the Holy Spirit,* Dörries concludes that chapters 10 through 27 constitute a recapitulation of a two-day dialogue between Eustathius and Basil in 372 or 373.[39] Most scholars agree that Basil's doctrine of the Holy Spirit developed in some sense out of dialogue with his mentor Eustathius, although not all find it necessary to imagine an actual two-day discourse recorded by scribes.[40] Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit* with Eustathius in mind as much as Eunomius. He was after all an ascetical monk, and he probably first gave serious attention to the importance of the Spirit when he returned from Athens and pursued the lifestyle of Eustathius,[41] in the context of these deeply spiritual communities intent on demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in their lives together. In the asceticism of Eustathius, the role of the Spirit was as a gift of God to the community of devoted Christians, a gift who actively sanctified them by altering their inner and outer lives; the Spirit reformed the passions and wills of the members of the community and formed ever increasing Christlikeness within them. Eustathius, like Origen, limited the activity of the Holy Spirit to the spiritual lives of believers. This monastic view of the Spirit in Eustathius deeply influenced Basil, but he would eventually reject its limitations.

Eustathius leaves behind no extant writings, and his doctrine of the Holy Spirit can only be pieced together through an examination of Basil's repudiation of it—with, perhaps, a discriminating eye able to lift the ideas out of the swirl of personal emotions and the fumes of an ardent, polemical context. Athanasius had identified certain "Spirit-slayers," or Pneumatomachians, who held to Nicene views of the relationship between the Father and the Son, but refused to honor the Holy Spirit, "saying that [the Spirit] is not only a creature,

39. Ibid., 33–35. The analysis of a series of twenty interchanges is found on 81–90.

40. Volker Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg von Homöusianer zum Neonizäner*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 66 (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1996), 183–212, summarizes the hypothesis of Dörries and analyzes Basil's letters for historical evidence to back up the claim. Drecoll concludes that the hypothesis is possible, but that the treatise retains little of the character of an oral debate, and the ideas present are also found in Basil's other writings and should not be seen as entirely derivative of the debate with Eustathius (212). Jean Gribomont had earlier defended the analysis, pointing out that, at the minimum, the influence of Eustathius on Basil should not be dismissed. Jean Gribomont, "Intransigence and Irenicism in Saint Basil's 'De Spiritu Sancto,'" in *Word and Spirit: A Monastic Review* (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1979), 129. Michael Haykin summarizes the argument that eventually centered on debate over the use of tachygraphers at the meeting. Michael Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 108–13.

41. Dörries, *Spiritu*, 28ff. Dörries summarizes the theological points and terms Basil draws from the monastic lexicon (159–61), claiming, "das Kloster is auch die Hauptstätte des δόγμα!" *Spiritu*, 161.

but actually one of the ministering spirits, and differs from the angels only in degree."[42] This appears to be the position of Eustathius that so deeply troubled Basil. *Epistles* 98 and 99, written in the summer of 372, both indicate that Basil was engaged in theological discussion with Eustathius and considered him a like-minded Christian leader. Eustathius was browbeaten with many charges against him, but Basil "found him, by God's grace, candidly in harmony with all orthodoxy."[43] When Eustathius was charged with heresy directly by Theodotus of Nicopolis, Basil tried to play the mediator, meeting for two days with Eustathius to discuss the theological problems before them. Basil recounts that in the end Eustathius recanted any troublesome beliefs and fell into perfect harmony with Basil's theology.[44] Basil had high hopes of reconciliation between the bishops of the three sees (Caesarea, Nicopolis, and Sebaste) and a united ministry in Cappadocia, but his many overtures to restore the ecclesiastical reputation of Eustathius failed. Basil risked his own reputation to reach out to Eustathius on three different occasions, but Eustathius would agree to one thing in person and immediately recant it through emissaries as soon as Basil left.[45]

Eustathius's own view of the Holy Spirit, founded perhaps on the teaching of Origen, delimited the activity of the Spirit within the communion of saints as a gift given by God for the strengthening and perfection of Christians in their push for righteousness.[46] When Basil met with Eustathius a final time, it appears he convinced Eustathius to concede to a number of important statements about the Holy Spirit. A "peace certificate"[47] was written as a coordinated account of the meeting and its results, and was signed by both Basil and Eustathius in front of many witnesses in Sebaste in 373. It survives as *Epistle* 125 in Basil's corpus, and in it we find the statement:

> It is necessary, therefore, to confess the Son as of the same substance [ὁμοούσιον] as the Father, as it is written, and to confess the Father in his own proper Person, and the Son in his own, and the Holy

42. *Letters to Serapion on the Spirit* 1.1 (PG 26, 532A; Shapland: 59–60). His opponents may have been referencing Heb 1:14. See below.

43. *Ep.* 98.2.9–11 (Courtonne 1:213; LCL: 169).

44. *Ep.* 99. An effort that failed to satisfy Theodotus, who grew suspicious of Basil for maintaining his ties to Eustathius. Theodotus received independent word that Eustathius's supposed agreement with Basil was feigned.

45. Dörries, *Spiritu*, 29–43; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 683–85; and see the note on *Ep.* 125 in the Loeb edition of Basil's letters (LCL: 258–61n1).

46. *First Principles* 1.3.7. See above in chapter 1.

47. *Friedensurkunde*. Dörries, *Spiritu*, 35.

> Spirit in his own, according as the fathers themselves have clearly set forth. For sufficiently and clearly have they shown this when they said, "Light of Light, the One which begot Light and the Other which was begotten, and yet Light and Light," so that the understanding of the substance [οὐσίας] is one and the same.[48]

This statement does not openly tie the Spirit to the Father and the Son by virtue of the key Nicene term *homoousios*, but Basil appears to have succeeded in listing the Spirit as one of the three hypostases of the Trinity, and in introducing the analogy from the substance of light that will help his later case against Eustathius.

The statement then quotes in full the text of the Nicene Creed, followed by a famous amendment that introduces the issue of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a fourth century, post-Arian problem:

> Since, therefore, all points with but one exception have been sufficiently and accurately defined herein, some as an emendation for what had been perverted, and others as a precaution against what was expected to arise—for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was laid down cursorily, not being considered as necessary of elaboration, because at that time this question had not yet been agitated, but the sense of it was unassailably inherent in the souls of the faithful—but since . . . the succession of impiety has broken forth into blasphemy against the Spirit . . . we must anathematize those who call the Holy Spirit a creature [κτίσμα], both those who think so, and those who will not confess that he is holy by nature [φύσει ἅγιον], even as the Father is holy by nature, and as the Son is holy by nature, but deprive him of his divine and blessed nature.[49]

Basil (and Eustathius by consent) suggests here that the gathering at Nicea fell short of a full doctrine of the Holy Spirit both in its positive doctrinal statement and in the anathemas. This statement reinforces Eustathius's break with his Alexandrian instructor Arius, and points out that more must be said about the Holy Spirit now than was said in 325, due to the agitations that are harming the churches. Basil does not say there is more known now than in the past, but that there is more to be said. The sense (διάνοιαν) of the doctrine of the Holy

48. *Ep.* 125.1.42–50 (Courtonne 2:32; LCL: 265). Cf. *Ep.* 52, where Basil elaborates on the Nicene metaphor of light from light.

49. *Ep.* 125.3.1–21 (Courtonne 2:33; LCL: 267).

Spirit was known by them and held in an unassailable position in their minds.[50] Basil means that knowledge that remained in the tacit dimension for the Nicene fathers must now be made explicit; we must learn to say what we already know and believe.

The agitations assailing the church can be averted, it seems, by holding to a doctrine of a community of nature between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is, the examined must not only remain silent, but must confess openly that the three Persons of the Trinity share in the quality of being "holy by nature" and must not refer to the Spirit as a creature.[51] Basil supports this claim with the proof from baptism:

> And the proof of orthodox opinion is not to separate him [the Holy Spirit] from the Father and the Son—for it is necessary for us to be baptized just as we have received, and to believe just as we have been baptized, and to worship just as we have come to believe the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.[52]

This statement refers to the baptismal command of Matthew 28:19 that is soon thereafter quoted as the concluding line of the treatise.

In his discussion with Eustathius, Basil has found common ground in the baptismal command as a shared liturgical and scriptural point that establishes the rite of baptism, which establishes right belief, which establishes right worship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[53] Of the origination of the Holy Spirit, they

50. "᾽Αλλ᾽ ἀνεπιβούλευτον ἐνυπάρχειν ταῖς τῶν πιστευόντων ψυχαῖς τὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ διάνοιαν." (Ibid., 125.3.6–7; Courtonne 2:33).

51. It is very likely that Basil at least had the tone and tenor of Athanasius's *Tome to the Antiochenes* (362 AD) in mind, if he did not have the actual letter in hand. Athanasius writes that the Meletians (wavering Homoiousians; see Hanson, *Search*, 282ff.) and any who hold heretical views of the Spirit can be received again into communion "without requiring more from them than to anathematize the Arian heresy and confess the faith confessed by the holy fathers at Nicaea, and to anathematize also those who say that the Holy Spirit is a creature and separate from the essence of Christ. For this is in truth a complete renunciation of the abominable heresy of the Arians, to refuse to divide the Holy Trinity or say that any part of it is a creature. For those who, while pretending to cite the faith confessed at Nicaea, venture to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, do nothing more than in words deny the Arian heresy while they retain it in thought." Athanasius puts a point on the dispute and begins a new chapter in the attention given to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by claiming that all the branches of Arian heresy can be detected simply by challenging them over the Holy Spirit and whether it is created or uncreated. Athanasius, *Tome to the Antiochenes* (PG 26, 800A; NPNF2 4:484). See also: Dörries, *Spiritu*, 38.

52. *Ep.* 125.3.21–25 (Courtonne 2:33).

53. Dörries calls this move, *gut Basilianisch*; it is indeed difficult to find any defense of the divinity of the Spirit in Basil that does not include an appeal to baptismal tradition and worship practices. (cf. *Ep*

agree only that the Spirit proceeds from the Father in an unknown way, but should not be called a "begetting" because this term applies only to the Son. They also agree that the order of recitation of the name of God the Trinity should not be altered from the order given in the baptismal command, but the Spirit should be after the Son, and the Son after the Father. One further point is made—that the Spirit cannot be counted among the ministering spirits:

> And we must anathematize also those who speak of the Holy Spirit as ministering [λειτουργικὸν], on the ground that by this expression they lower him to the order of creatures. For Scripture has handed down to us the ministering spirits as creatures, saying, *All are ministering spirits sent to minister* [Heb. 1:14].[54]

The voice of history can only speculate as to what doctrine, or what statement of agreement, caused Eustathius and his colleagues to immediately regret signing the treatise and renounce all association with Basil, but this point of doctrine is likely the place where Basil pushed the Eustathian monks one step too far. A Eustathian could agree with the importance of the rite of baptism, and even that the name of God is invoked as taught by Jesus Christ himself as "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," so long as the Basilian admits that this is a given and set order. A Eustathian could refrain from calling the Spirit a creature if it mattered so dearly to the rest of the church, and so long as all agreed that it owed its origination to the Father in some mysterious way. But the Spirit must be regarded as subservient to the Son in the Eustathian community, delivered as a gift of the Lord Jesus to serve the Lord by rectifying and sanctifying the Lord's body, the church. The Spirit serves the Son as the Son serves the Father. Perhaps this was the breaking point for them: the anathema of those who call the Spirit a servant (λειτουργικὸν). The Eustathians denounced Basil and reexamined all that had been agreed, including the meaning of the baptismal command. Basil left with a signed agreement in hand, only to find out while still completing the journey home that Eustathius and his colleagues had already repealed agreement, renounced communion with Basil, and accused him of Apollinarianism.

As the treatise of reconciliation, *Epistle* 125, ended with the baptismal command of Matthew 28:19, so does Basil begin his refutation of his unnamed "opponents" in *On the Holy Spirit* with the same verse.[55] It appears that the

105: "Ὡς καὶ ἡ τοῦ σωτηρίου βαπτίσματος παράδοσις μαρτυρεῖ"). Dörries, *Spiritu*, 35. Cf. Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 389.

54. *Ep.* 125.3.34–39 (Courtonne 2:34; LCL: 269).

baptismal command has become the centerpiece of the debate between Basil and the Pneumatomachians. Eustathius openly associated himself with the group of Macedonians who purportedly took their name from the Homoiousian bishop Macedonius of Constantinople (exiled in 360), but were coined "Spirit-fighters" by Athanasius and Basil.[56] Basil is confident that the baptismal command is an adequate basis for his Trinitarian theology. To begin his refutation of these opponents, Basil writes,

> They say that it is not suitable to rank the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, because he is different in nature and inferior in dignity from them. But it is fitting for us to respond to them with the apostle's words: *We must obey God rather than men* [Acts 5:29]. When the Lord established the baptism of salvation, did he not clearly command his disciples to baptize all nations *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* [Matt. 28:19]? He did not disdain his fellowship with the Holy Spirit, but these men say that we should not rank him with the Father and the Son. . . . If they will not admit that this arrangement of Father, Son, and Spirit testifies to their union and fellowship, let them explain to us why we should agree with their opinion. . . . But no one is so shameless that he will deny the obvious meaning of the words which clearly say the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. So let our opponents be silent; as for us, we will follow the words of Scripture.[57]

Basil has said nothing here to win the day. The baptismal command is universally regarded, but its meaning is not resolved. For Eustathius, the ordering of the names is a clear indication of the subordination of the Spirit to the Father and Son, even if he would at times stand with the Father/Son relationship delineated by Nicea. It is highly unlikely that the Eustathian community disdained the Spirit, but that they regarded the Spirit as subservient to the will of the Son, sent by the ascended Jesus Christ to complete his teaching and sanctify his community. For Basil to say that his opponents are "shameless" and that the meaning of the words of the baptismal command is "obvious" are

55. *Spir.* 10.24. *On the Holy Spirit* can be divided into opening arguments on the relationship between the Father and the Son (1–8), a unique chapter on the qualities of the Spirit (9), and the seriatim arguments in defense of the Spirit against the Macedonians (Eustathius) in chapters (10–27), with a conclusion on the state of the church (28–30).

56. Hanson, *Search*, 760–72. Cf. Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion* 1.32; Basil, *Spir.* 11.27, 21.52.

57. *Spir.* 10.24.1–21 (SC 17:332–34; Anderson: 45).

rhetorical tactics. His true argument is to meet the Eustathians on their own ground and discuss the effects, the activities of the Holy Spirit in the baptized believer, and prove that these works can only be the works of God alone.

Basil found that in interpreting the rite of baptism, there were distinct differences between his own position and that of Eustathius and Eunomius on either side. Eunomius's subordinationism did not allow for the proper invocation of God as ordained by Jesus in Matthew 28:19, the invocation of a single God performing a single divine act as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The single immersion of Eunomius's congregation abrogated the revealed differentiation between the Persons of the Trinity. Likewise, Eustathius's view of the Spirit as a subservient divine being able to do nothing but what was commanded by the Son, able to move only within the community of the holy, made the invocation of the Spirit at baptism a foolish enterprise and suggested that a subordinate being can reveal the knowledge of God. Basil will argue for an omnipresent Holy Spirit, differentiated from the Father and the Son, but nevertheless sharing equally in the community of the Godhead. Basil was certain, above all else, that only God knows God and only God can introduce knowledge of God to the human mind.[58] If the Spirit does this in baptism, the reader must conclude that the Spirit is God.

Baptism Is Illumination

In a sermon written early in his episcopate,[59] *Exhortation to Baptism*, Basil ties baptism to illumination by clustering together a series of verses of Scripture and claiming that they mean more together than they mean apart. In his view, they are all referring to baptism.

58. His affiliation with this notion is found in his faithfulness to Pauline verses like 1 Corinthians 2:10–11: "These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. . . . So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God." For example: "The very essence of God is beyond intelligence and beyond all human knowledge. Surely I think this comprehension transcends not only human beings, but every rational nature. Now by 'rational nature' here, I mean one that is in the created order. For the Father is known to the Son alone, and by the Holy Spirit, because *no one knows the Father except the Son* [Matt. 11:27], and *The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God*. What then will remain distinctive about the knowledge retained by the Only-Begotten or the Holy Spirit if indeed they themselves [Basil's opponents] have the comprehension of the very essence?" *Eun.* 1.13.43–1.14.14 (SC 1:220). See also *Eun.* 3.4.45; *Spir*. 16.38.77, 16.40.45, 19.50.24, 24.56.3.

59. Possibly dated 371. Paul Fedwick, "A Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil of Caesarea," in his *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, vol 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 9 n33.

> John proclaimed a baptism of repentance, and all Judea went out to him. The Lord proclaims a baptism of adoption [cf. Rom. 8:15]; and who of those who have put their hope in him will not submit to it? The former was the introduction to baptism, and the latter its perfection; the former a removal of sin, the latter communion with God. John's proclamation was that of one solitary man, yet it drew all towards repentance. But you, having been instructed by the prophets, *Wash, become clean* [Isa. 1:16]; having been taught by the psalm, *Look to him and be illumined* [Ps. 33:6, LXX]; having been evangelized by the apostles, *Repent each of you and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the promise*[60] *of the Holy Spirit* [Acts 2:38]; having received from the Lord himself, who says, *Come to me all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you relief* [Matt. 11:28]. All these passages are understood today when they sit down in council together.[61]

Basil associates baptism with the relief of the burden of sin, so he can bring Matthew 11:28 into the Scripture cluster and suggest that this is a reference to baptism spoken by Jesus. The more difficult task is to cull baptismal references out of the Septuagint. Basil proclaims that Christian baptism can be found prefigured in the Old Testament and cites two verses. From Isaiah, he draws a verse about washing and being made clean, which seems to fit naturally with a discussion of baptism. In fact, Isaiah 1:16–17 had been associated with baptism before Basil.[62] The passage fits easily into a Christian liturgy of baptism, with its emphasis on coming to the Lord, washing, and being made clean in God's sight.[63] But Basil adds to this verse and builds a cluster of passages that he declares must all be understood together, with baptism hovering over them. From the Psalms he draws the phrase, *Look to him and be illumined*.[64] The verse

60. Basil reads "promise" (ἐπαγγελίαν) instead of the otherwise attested "gift" (δωρεὰν). His concerns with the misunderstanding of the Spirit as a "gift" are made clear at *Spir.* 24.57.

61. *Exhortation to Baptism* (PG 31, 425AB).

62. It is the opening verse of Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures*, for example, preparing a convert for baptism. (PG 33, 369).

63. "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Isaiah 1:16–20.

itself contains no reference to baptism, nor to washing, nor is there any water in the verse at all. But there is illumination. Basil ties baptism to this verse in the Psalms on the basis of the word "illumine" (φωτίζω), following in a line of Christian thought that equates baptism with illumination. Basil had absorbed such a tradition and has begun to build upon it, finding the authority to exegete Psalm 33:6 (LXX), which only mentions illumination, as a verse about baptism. The importance of exegetical moves such as this one cannot be overlooked in historical theology. Basil made a statement here about the meaning of the Bible for the Christian church based on the association between baptism and illumination. There is no doubt that illumination is Basil's primary concern in the sacrament of baptism.

One tradition that precedes Basil and associates baptism with illumination is found in Justin Martyr's *First Apology*.[65] The initiate has made a confession of assent to faith prior to the act of baptism, which Justin equates with being born again.[66] Justin cites Isaiah 1:16-20 as the authority for the claim that baptism is a removal of sin, just as we see Basil refer to this passage in his *Exhortation to Baptism*. Baptism is a washing that begins a new life of being reconciled to God. Justin describes baptism in this way:

> And this washing is called illumination [φωτισμός], as those who learn these things are illuminated in the mind. And he who is illuminated is washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold all the things about Jesus.[67]

Justin presents us with the first written evidence of clear association of the term illumination (φωτισμός) directly with baptism itself, an association that was soon customary in the Christian tradition.[68] Baptism is in such close association with the illumination of the mind that Βαπτισμός and φωτισμός are used interchangeably in many Christian writings.

64. "Προσέλθατε πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ φωτίσθητε." Ps 33:6, LXX.

65. *First Apology* 61 (Barnard: 66).

66. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Continuum, 2006), 72–73.

67. *First Apology* 61 (Barnard: 67).

68. Hebrews 6:4 and 10:32 refer to the beginning of the Christian life as illumination, but do not definitively refer to baptism. See also 2 Cor 4:6 in this regard. Clement of Alexandria writes of baptism: "The same also takes place in our case, whose exemplar Christ became. Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal," but does not equate baptism and illumination. *The Instructor* 1.6 (ANF 2:414). See also: Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 2.

Basil's view of baptism proves similar to Justin Martyr and looms even larger on the landscape. For Basil, the word *baptism* encapsulates many periods of the history of the relationship between God and the church. It did not begin, in his view, with the ministry of John the Baptist but was foreshadowed by a host of events in the history of the Jewish people. Baptism was prefigured in Moses and proclaimed by John the Baptist prior to its perfect consummation in the teaching of Jesus. In *Concerning Baptism*, Basil explores the progression from the baptism of Moses to the baptism of Jesus.

> So out of all of these proofs[69] the superiority of the baptism according to the gospel of Christ is manifest. . . . The baptism handed down through Moses recognized a difference in sins for one thing; the grace of pardon was not given for all transgressions equally. Furthermore, it required various sacrifices, specified rules concerning purification, set a time of segregation for the unclean and defiled, and appointed days and seasons for observance. Only then was baptism received, as though it were a seal of the purification. The baptism of John was much better in many respects. It recognized no distinction of sins, nor did it require a variety of sacrifices, nor did it parse out the rules for purification or appoint days or seasons. Without there being any manner of delay, anyone confessing his sins, no matter how many or what sort, immediately came under the grace of God and His Christ. He was baptized in the river Jordan and received pardon at once for his sins.[70]

Basil sees imperfect models of Jesus' baptism in the observances found in Moses and in John the Baptist. The baptism of Moses did provide for reconciliation between the people and God, but it did so through a fastidious system of rites based on a differentiation of levels of sin and the purification they necessitated. It required a system of religious purification and used the baptism itself as a seal of an earned righteousness. John's baptism superseded that of Moses, and was an improvement in its simplification. Sin was one problem, no matter the number or severity of the acts, and the baptism cleansed the initiate from all sin immediately, claims Basil. But the baptism of the Lord is even greater still, because it reveals sublime notions of God to the initiate.

69. Basil has proven the superiority of Jesus' baptism in the previous paragraph by referring to Matthew 12:6, 41–42; 2 Corinthians 3:10; John 3:30; Matthew 3:11, and Mark 1:7.

70. *Concerning Baptism* 1.2.5 (PG 31, 1533AB)

> The baptism of the Lord, however, has a meaning that surpasses all human reason; it contains a glory beyond all that a person hopes or prays for, a preeminence of grace and power that exceeds the others more than the sun outshines the stars. . . . However, it is not necessary on this basis to keep silent about it, but employing the very same words of our Lord Jesus Christ as our guides and, as it were, groping our way *in a mirror dimly* [1 Cor. 13:12], we must speak.[71]

Part of the perfection of the baptism of Jesus is a new understanding of sin. In Moses, sins are ranked according to severity, but in the New Testament sin is sin with the same effect for any degree. Basil equates the entire cultic system of purification in the Jewish Temple with baptism, the baptism of Moses.[72] This baptism is overthrown by the baptism of John, according to Basil, which was merely a baptism of water. But the baptism of John is not yet the rite instituted by Jesus himself, as Basil writes in *On the Holy Spirit*: "We are able to distinguish between the grace that comes from the Spirit and mere baptism in water. John baptized in water for repentance, but our Lord Jesus Christ baptized in the Holy Spirit [cf. Matt. 3:11]."[73] It is to the rite of baptism initiated by Jesus that Basil dedicates his treatise, *Concerning Baptism*, in two books.

Basil is clear that the initiate must be instructed before coming to the waters of baptism, and must make every effort to remove distractions from the mind through moral behavior before being instructed. He writes, "It is necessary, therefore, to receive instruction before baptism, having first removed any impediment to learning and so making ourselves fit to receive the instruction."[74] Basil points out that Matthew 28:19 does not jump immediately to baptism, after all, but begins with the commandment to teach all nations and make disciples of them:

> Then he sent them forth with the words: *Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you* [Matt. 28:19-20]. The Lord, in giving his command,

71. Ibid., (PG 31, 1533C).

72. Cf. *Spir.* 14.31–33, where Basil explores 1 Corinthians 10:2: "And all were baptized into Moses."

73. *Spir.* 15.36.12–15 (SC 17:370; Anderson: 59–60).

74. *Concerning Baptism* 1.2.26 (PG 31, 1569B; Wagner: 383). At the beginning of the same chapter, he writes, "We must bear in mind that instruction is necessary before we are worthy to receive this most admirable baptism." 1.2.1 (PG 31, 1525C; Wagner: 349).

> however, said first: *teach ye all nations*, and then added: *baptizing them*, and so on.[75]

When Basil was asked to produce a treatise on baptism, then, he felt compelled first to speak of the instruction necessary prior to baptism; it is necessary first to become a disciple and then to be baptized. Basil's view of discipleship is outlined clearly in what follows. He writes,

> Now, a disciple, as we learn from the Lord himself, is one who comes to the Lord for the purpose of following him, that is, to hear his words, to believe in him and obey him as Master, King, Physician, and Teacher of truth, in the hope of gaining eternal life.[76]

There is a deep personal commitment involved in discipleship for Basil, and it is here that his ascetic sensibilities take hold, proving once again that Basil does not see the monastic order as a separate way of life, but the Christian way of life lived with the least distraction and the most liberty from the world.

Amand de Mendieta points out that the difference in Basil between monastic asceticism and common Christian life is a difference not of kind, but of degree. Some are free to move away from certain distractions such as marriage, secular work, or other worldly binds and explore deeper monastic piety, but all who strive earnestly to be disciples of Jesus Christ are subject to the same overarching principles of Christian piety.[77] This axiom is proved in Basil's treatment of baptism. The initiate is to make a clean break with the world. This may not result in a cenobitic lifestyle, but it must be a dramatic break that touches every aspect of the initiate's life. The first movement in the progression toward baptism, for Basil, is to break free of the binds of Satan and of the world.

> In view of these utterances and other similar ones, we are under the strictest obligation, unless we have received in vain the grace of God [cf. 2 Cor. 6:1], first, to free ourselves from the dominion of the devil who leads a slave of sin into evils even against his will. Secondly, each of us, after denying himself present satisfactions and breaking off his attachment to this life, must become a disciple of the Lord, as he himself said: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and*

75. Ibid., 1.1.1 (PG 31, 1513C; Wagner: 339).

76. Ibid., 1.1.2 (PG 31, 1516B; Wagner: 340–41).

77. Amand de Mendieta, *Ascèse*, 3, 12–13. For this reason, Basil's ascetical corpus should not be read as a series of internal monastic manuals, but as ideals for all Christians to participate in by varying degrees. See also: Frazee, *Asceticism*, 27.

> *take up his cross and follow me* [Matt. 16:24]. That is, "let him become my disciple."[78]

This means a wholesale rejection of every tie to the world and the present order of life, in Basil's view. The initiate can allow nothing to bind him to the world, even family, friends or state; even the noble obligations must be repudiated if they cause distraction: "A human obligation, therefore, however honorable it may appear, if it retards us ever so slightly in rendering the wholehearted obedience we owe to God, is to be repudiated by a person who wishes to become the Lord's disciple."[79] This repudiation of the world is something that Basil will develop later in the treatise as dying to the world in order to be born again into new life.[80] Basil sums up the first movement of the initiate once again:

> If we have faith in these words, we will, first of all, with the grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . free ourselves from the tyranny of the devil by refraining from every action that is pleasing to the devil. Secondly, we will renounce not only the world and its concupiscences, but also the just claims we have on one another, and, even our life itself, whenever any of these things distracts us from the wholehearted and immediate submission we owe to God. Then shall we be worthy to become disciples of the Lord.[81]

The first responsibility belongs to the initiate, who must make the concerted effort to alter his moral course of life and behavior away from the simple satisfactions of the world and the devil, and toward the higher moral order of Christianity. In the summary of this first movement, however, Basil makes room for the helping hand of God in the life of the initiate prior to baptism, suggesting that it is only "with the grace of God" that the initiate can make such a change.

After this moral turning and break with the world, the initiate finds relief from the bonds of sin through believing in the new covenant proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

78. *Concerning Baptism* 1.1.3 (PG 31, 1520A; Wagner: 343).

79. Ibid., 1.1.4 (PG 31, 1521AB; Wagner: 345).

80. "By these words [cf. Rom. 6:6] we are taught that he who is baptized in Christ is baptized in his death, and is not only buried with Christ and planted together with him, but is first of all crucified with him." Ibid., 1.2.14 (PG 31, 1549BC; Wagner: 368).

81. Ibid., 1.1.4 (PG 31, 1524C; Wagner: 347).

> But we all escape the condemnation for our sins referred to above, if we believe in the grace of God through his Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: *This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins* [Matt. 26:28]. . . . When pardon for his transgressions is granted, then does man obtain of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, our Lord, deliverance from his sinful state and thereupon is he rendered fit to receive instruction.[82]

The initiate must have received some form of instruction if he has already turned from one way of life into another way of life, so it is not patently clear what Basil is referring to here as "instruction." The initiate is clearly meant to be on a course of instruction, and it may be that only after the moral alteration and the confession of faith in the new covenant is the initiate ready to receive instruction about the creeds. Basil finishes this portion of the treatise with a summation introducing the main themes that can be found in the Nicene Creed (creation, incarnation, resurrection, ascension, second coming, and judgment).[83]

Moral transformation, a commitment of belief in the new covenant, instruction in creedal Christianity—all of these precede the sacred rite of baptism in Basil's schema. The rite of baptism, when it finally occurs, is not a mere seal set on the initiate as a sign of the successful performance of a series of penitential acts for purification, as Basil summarized the baptism of Moses, nor is it an external washing for forgiveness of sins as with John the Baptist, but it is rather a divine act involving Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

> John the Baptist, than whom there is no greater among them that are born of woman [cf. Matt. 11:11], likewise bears witness in the words: *He must increase, but I must decrease* [John 3:30]; and again: *I indeed baptize you in water unto penance, but he baptizes you in the Holy Spirit and fire* [Matt. 3:11], and so in many other places. The Holy Spirit is as far superior to water as he who baptizes in the Holy Spirit obviously is to him who baptizes in water. And this is true also of the baptism itself.[84]

Baptism is an act of God the Holy Spirit in the believer.

82. Ibid., 1.1.3 (PG 31, 1520B; Wagner: 344).
83. Ibid., 1.1.4 (PG 31, 1524D–1525A; Wagner: 348).
84. Ibid., 1.2.4 (PG 31, 1532D; Wagner: 354–55).

Within baptism, Basil explores another sort of progression of the initiate. While the rite takes place in one instance and with the invocation of the name of God, that is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Basil explores the progress of the Christian through the Spirit to the Son and eventually to the Father. Basil clearly finds grounds for the individual subsistence of each Person of the Trinity in the baptismal command, writing:

> But perhaps we should now proceed to another consideration and, by our faith in Christ, to arrive at the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. First of all, it is necessary to point out that the particular glory of the one named is signified by each name. Secondly, it must be borne in mind that the Lord himself revealed the significance of baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit when he said, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit* [John 3:6].[85]

When Basil speaks of someone being born again, he relates this with the work of the Spirit. It is the Spirit that grants rebirth by associating the believer with Christ's crucifixion and killing the old person, and then regenerating the person into new life. After entering into the baptism into the name of the Holy Spirit, the baptized also enters into the name of Jesus Christ:

> And so, planted together with Christ in the likeness of his death, baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, born anew as to the inner man in newness of mind, and built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets [cf. Eph. 2:20], we may be made worthy to be baptized in the name of the Only-Begotten Son of God and merit to receive the great grace of which the Apostle speaks when he says, *As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ* [Gal. 3:27].[86]

So according to the extended analogy of the birth of a child, the baptism into the name of the Spirit is the moment of birth and "it follows necessarily that he who has been born is also clothed,"[87] and this is the baptism into the name of

85. Ibid., 1.2.20 (PG 31, 1560C; Wagner: 376).
86. Ibid., 1.2.22 (PG 31, 1564BC; Wagner: 379).
87. Ibid., 1.2.23 (PG 31, 1564C; Wagner: 379).

Jesus Christ. This proceeds to the final stage of baptism into the name of the Father:

> Then, when the soul has been clothed with the Son of God, it becomes worthy of the final and perfect stage and is baptized in the name of the Father himself of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to the testimony of John, gave the power to be made sons of God [cf. John 1:12].[88]

His exploration of the rite of Trinitarian baptism as a progression is summed up as he begins a final chapter:

> Thus, baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, we were born anew. Having been born, we were also baptized in the name of the Son, and we put on Christ. Then, having put on the new man according to God, we were baptized in the name of the Father and called sons of God.[89]

Basil has turned Matthew 28:19 on its head to provide an interpretation of Trinitarian baptism as a progression from Spirit to Son to Father. It is not an actual, ontological progression, but an analogy that tries to bring to mind the ineffable reality of the great mystery of baptism according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The progression of the one being baptized into the Trinitarian name of God directly reflects the doctrine of the activities of God, the *energeiai* that proceed from the Father as a source, through the Son as the actor, and are completed in the Spirit.[90] Basil is exploring the Trinitarian aspects of baptism in ways that have not yet been expressed. What matters to him is that in Matthew 28:19, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are held in equal glory and called upon in equal authority as the singular name of God.

Basil is also addressing the moment of baptism as a moment of entering into a unique relationship with God. All three Persons of the Trinity are brought into the life of the believer in this sacrament. In a little-known sermon, Basil explains clearly that the proper understanding of the Trinity is founded upon the rite of baptism.

88. Ibid., 1.2.24 (PG 31, 1565AB; Wagner: 380).

89. Ibid., 1.3.1 (PG 31, 1573B; Wagner: 387).

90. "First think of him who is the first cause of all that exists: namely, the Father, and then of the Son, who is the creator, and then the Holy Spirit, the perfecter." *Spir.* 16.38.13–15 (SC 17:376–78).

> So, then, whenever we conjoin the Trinity, do not imagine the three as parts of a single indivisible reality—such a thought is impious! Rather, recognize the inseparable consubstantiality [ὁμοουσίαν] of three perfect incorporeals. For wherever the Holy Spirit is present, there also Christ resides. Wherever Christ, there also the Father is clearly present. *Do you not know that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit within you* [1 Cor. 6:19]. And: *If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him* [1 Cor. 3:17]. So, then, when we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we receive Christ who dwells *in our inner man* [Eph. 3:16], and along with Christ, we receive the Father who makes a home together with him in those who are worthy. Both the teaching handed down about baptism and the confession of faith shows this conjunction. . . . Those who separate the Spirit from the Father and Son, and number him with the created order, not only make baptism incomplete but also fall short of the confession of faith. For the Trinity does not remain Trinity when the Spirit is subtracted from it.[91]

Baptism is an initiation into communion with God. Not only does the Holy Spirit reside within the baptized, but the Son and the Father as well. This is nonsense if the Holy Spirit is removed from the Son and the Father by any interval of separation.

Basil inherited a tradition of associating baptism with divine illumination. Upon this foundation, he began to build up additional Scripture clusters and traditions of exegesis associating Scriptures with baptism on the basis of their discussion of illumination. His theology of baptism is drawn from the covenant history of God represented in the Bible and culminating in the baptism initiated by Jesus Christ. Baptism is an initiation into knowledge of God and an experience of divine illumination. If it is God alone who reveals knowledge of God, initiates believers in the holy and eternal life, and illumines their mind with divine light, then it will become critical to discuss how exactly God is invoked at baptism and whether the Spirit also is part of this invocation. Jesus has associated the Spirit with himself and the Father in the baptismal command, so one must conclude that the Spirit, who illumines, is God.

91. *Against Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoians* 5 (PG 31, 609C–612A). I am grateful to Mark DelCogliano for pointing out the importance of this sermon.

The Spirit of God Illumines the Baptized

Around 348 AD, in Jerusalem, a presbyter named Cyril, who would soon be the bishop, delivered the *Catechetical Lectures* for a new class of baptismal initiates. The series was passed on to posterity as a catechesis for those preparing for baptism, and rightfully so since this was his intent, but the title of his lectures is *A Catechesis for Those Being Illumined*.[92] For Cyril, baptism and illumination were synonyms.[93] Cyril emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in performing the illumination at baptism, "since baptism is the sacrament of the Spirit."[94] Cyril encourages his listeners to "believe also in the Holy Spirit," and avoid false doctrines from those who do not know him.[95] Later he says,

> We neither separate the Trinity, as some do, nor confuse the Persons, as Sabellius did; but we devoutly recognize One Father who sent his Son, and One Son who promised to send the Paraclete from the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who spoke by the prophets and who descended upon the apostles in the form of tongues of fire at Pentecost here in Jerusalem, in the most-high Church of the Apostles. . . . To define accurately the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit is impossible; we must be content to guard against errors on various sides.[96]

But even if the hypostasis is beyond the scope of reason, the works of the Spirit can still be discussed, particularly in the inspiration of Scripture and in the power expected at baptism.[97] The power of the Spirit is manifest in the sacrament of baptism, for Cyril, making possible the confession of the Holy Trinity:

> This Spirit enlightens [φωτίζει] the souls of the righteous . . . who with the Father and the Son together is honored, and at the time of Holy Baptism is included with them in the Holy Trinity. For the Only-Begotten Son of God said plainly to the Apostles, *Go ye, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the*

92. PG 33, 369.

93. As they were for Justin and others, and as they still are in many Orthodox churches today. When children are baptized, family and friends are invited to witness their "Holy Illumination."

94. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 199.

95. *Catechetical Lectures* 4.16 (PG 33, 476A; Swete: 200).

96. Ibid., 16.4 (PG 33, 921A–924B; Swete: 202).

97. Ibid., 4.16 (PG 33, 473B–476B).

> *Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* [Matt. 28:19]. Our hope is in Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost.[98]

The initiates need not worry that the Spirit is a coercive or vindictive force, or that he is like the demons who drive the minds of those who receive them into mania; rather,

> He comes to us gently and gradually, heralded by the dawning of a new day within the soul. He comes to save and to heal, to teach and to admonish, to give strength and comfort and light. . . . He illumines [φωτίζεται] the soul and makes it see what is beyond human sight. Under his influence the soul mirrors the heavens, while the body is still on earth. With Isaiah, it beholds the Lord seated on his throne; with Ezekiel, it sees him who rides upon the cherubim; with Daniel, it discerns the thousand thousands of the angelic host. Man, little as he is, in the Spirit sees the beginning and end of the world, the intermediate reaches of time, the succession of dynasties. He knows what he has never learned, for the true Illuminator [ἀληθινὸς φωταγωγός] is with him.[99]

The association of the Holy Spirit with illumination has not been lost between Justin and Cyril, and Cyril takes the metaphor to new heights in his claims of the palpable works of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the believer. These are the things that are possible to know about the Spirit, not his hypostasis or nature,[100] but the works that he manifests in the very minds of the initiate at baptism and in the life of the Christian. Cyril's influence on Basil is difficult to assess. Basil does not mention him by name, but Pruche is confident pointing out a number of general references to Cyril's thought in his edition of *On the Holy Spirit*.

Like Cyril, Basil expects something to happen at baptism; he expects the Spirit to move and to fill the initiate with his presence—to illumine his mind. Basil begins with the argument for the omnipresence of the Spirit. The Spirit is divinely simple, unified being, but also present to all:

98. Ibid., 16.3–4 (PG 33, 920B, 921A; NPNF2 7:287).

99. Ibid., 16.16 (PG 33, 940C–941A; Swete: 204). Cf. Isaiah 6:1, Ezekiel 10:1, and Daniel 7:10.

100. "It is enough for us to know these things; be not curious as to the Spirit's nature or hypostasis. Had it been revealed in Scripture, we should have spoken of it; what is not written, let us not venture to touch. It is sufficient for salvation to know that there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit." *Catechetical Lectures* 16.24 (PG 33, 953A; Swete: 205–6)

> Simple in its being, varied in its energies, present wholly to everybody and present whole everywhere. It is distributed without process and shared as still whole, according to the model of the sun's rays whose benefit is present to him who feels it as to him alone and yet illuminates the earth and the sea and mingles with the air. So the Spirit is present to each of those who receive him as to him alone, but produces sufficiently to everyone unimpaired grace, and its recipients enjoy it as far as their nature allows, but not as far as its power extends.[101]

The Spirit is present to all and in all places. The Spirit is omnipresent.[102] At baptism, however, there is a special reception of the Spirit in the life of the believer that manifests itself in super-human cognitive abilities—knowledge of future events, discernment of mysterious things, and an awareness of the individual's position before God in God's eternal kingdom. In the philosophical chapter 9 of *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil proclaims the effects of the Spirit's presence.

> Only when a man has been cleansed from the shame of his evil [i.e., baptized], and has returned to his natural beauty, and the original form of the royal image has been restored in him, is it possible for him to approach the Paraclete. Then, like the sun, he will show you in himself the image of the invisible, and with purified eyes you will see in this blessed image the unspeakable beauty of its prototype. . . . When a sunbeam falls on a transparent substance, the substance itself become brilliant, and radiates light from itself. So too Spirit-bearing souls, illumined by him, finally become spiritual themselves, and their grace is sent forth to others. From this comes knowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of hidden things, distribution of wonderful gifts, heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of angels, endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and, the highest of all desires, becoming God.[103]

101. *Spir.* 9.22.32–40 (SC 17:326; Hanson, *Search*, 773–74).

102. Ibid.

103. "Πρόγνωσις, μυστηρίων σύνεσις [cf. Col 1:26; Rom 16:25], κεκρυμένων κατάληψις, καρισμάτων διανομαί [cf. 1 Cor 2:12], τὸ οὐράνιον πολίτευμα [Phil 3:20], ἡ μετὰ ἀγγέλων χορεία [cf. Rev 5:11], ἡ ἀτελεύτητος εὐφροσύνη, ἡ ἐν Θεῷ διαμονή, ἡ πρὸς Θεὸν ὁμοίωσις, τό ἀκρότατον τῶν ὀρεκτῶν, θεὸν γενέσθαι." Ibid., 9.23.5–25 (SC 17:326–28; Anderson: 44).

The Spirit is responsible for the illumination that takes place at baptism. Baptism is an illumination that makes knowledge of God possible, and the Spirit is the One who illumines.

Basil is wrestling here with the notion that the Spirit comes upon the individual at baptism as the dove descended upon Jesus at his baptism, that baptism is a bestowal of the Spirit. This notion feeds too easily into the Eustathian model in which the Spirit is sent by the Son as a subservient Spirit to sanctify the believer after he or she has been baptized. Basil believes that the Spirit will sanctify the believer after baptism too, but also believes that the Spirit is free to range all of creation as God and does not only operate in the saints. To solve this riddle, Basil employs the metaphor of the sun and its rays. An individual feels the sun and thinks the sun is shining just on him or her, but the sun shines equally in all places at the same time. So it is with the Spirit at baptism. Its illuminating power has been effective all along, but it is felt in an individual way by the initiate at baptism.[104]

Basil recounts his own experience of baptism in the course of *On the Holy Spirit*, making it clear that for him "baptism was the basic religious experience and the immovable foundation of Trinitarian theology."[105] Basil writes in chapter 10:

> What makes us Christians? "Our faith," everyone would answer. How are we saved? Obviously through the regenerating grace of baptism. How else could we be? We are confirmed in our understanding that salvation comes through Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Shall we cast away the standard of teaching we received? This would surely be grounds for great sorrow; if we now reject what we accepted at baptism, we will be found to be further away from our salvation than when we first believed. . . . If baptism is the beginning of my life, and the day of my regeneration is the first of days, it is obvious that the words spoken when I received the grace of adoption are more honorable than any spoken since.[106]

104. "This remarkable fusion of biblical doctrine, Origen and Plotinus certainly does not confine the activity of the Holy Spirit to the elect, nor does it do full justice to the eschatological nature of the Spirit in the New Testament, but it makes it plain that the Spirit cannot be less than God without ever directly saying so." Hanson, *Search*, 774.

105. Haykin, *Spirit*, 129. Cf. Dörries, *Spiritu*, 57, 133–34.

106. *Spir.* 10.26.1–20 (SC 17:336; Anderson: 46–47).

The baptismal confession is not only the foundation of all Christian belief, as Basil elsewhere argues, but it is the highest statement of Christian theology that a person could expect to make in life. The baptismal formula is the basis of the whole system of Christian theology, the entire order of salvation contained in the gospel. Basil has turned to a more personal note, remembering his own day of baptism administered by Dianius, bishop of Caesarea, in 357,[107] and in that vein he continues,

> How could I be snared by these subtle arguments, and abandon the tradition which led me to the light, and gave me the blessing of divine knowledge? Through this confession I was made a child of God, I, who was his enemy for so long because of my sins [cf. Rom. 8:15-16; 5:10]. May I pass from this life to the Lord with this confession on my lips.[108]

It is out of this personal experience of baptism that Basil is most moved to charge the church to keep the traditions received:

> I exhort them to keep the faith inviolate until the day of Christ's coming: they must not divide the Spirit from the Father and the Son, but must preserve in the profession of faith and in the doxology the teaching they received at their baptism.[109]

The baptismal confession is the foundation. All subsequent theological statements need to be based on this confession. It is the heart of Christian belief, for Basil.

Again like Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil expects a new sort of divine power to be added to the human being at baptism. Baptism is regeneration into new life; it is a dying to the old and a birth to the new, and in this dying and rising again a new sort of power comes into the life of the believer:

107. Rousseau, *Basil*, 25, 62, 84–85. Basil recounts his admiration for Dianius in *Ep.* 51. Dianius and Basil suffered a strained relationship when Dianius accepted the (Homoian) confession at Constantinople in 360, but were reconciled later. Basil records that Dianius rejected his subscription in 360 and restored himself to fidelity with the Nicene Creed on his deathbed.

108. *Spir.* 10.26.20–25 (SC 17:336–38; Anderson: 47).

109. Ibid., 10.26.25–29 (SC 17:338; Anderson: 47). We can only surmise that the words Basil refers to here included a liturgical interrogation at baptism and perhaps also refer to the confession of the Nicene Creed, but "in most rites the formal reddition of the creed took place some days, or at least some hours, before the baptism." Kelly, *Creeds*, 40.

> On the one hand, the body of sin is destroyed [cf. Rom. 6:6], that it may never bear fruit for death. On the other hand, we are made to live by the Spirit [cf. 2 Cor. 3:6], and bear fruit in holiness. The water receives our body as a tomb, and so becomes the image of death, while the Spirit pours in life-giving power, renewing in souls which were dead in sin the life they first possessed [cf. Eph. 2:1-2]. This is what it means to be *born again of water and Spirit* [John 3:5]: the water accomplishes our death, while the Spirit raises us to life. This great sign of baptism is fulfilled in three immersions, with three invocations, so that the image of the death might be completely formed, and the newly-baptized might have their souls enlightened [φωτισθῶσιν] with divine knowledge.[110]

One can see how deeply Basil's pneumatology and baptismal doctrine have been influenced by reading Paul. The primary text that Basil is interpreting is Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3, in which Jesus explains that it is necessary to be born again of water and of spirit to enter the kingdom of God. Basil explains Jesus' dialogue by referring to Paul. Rebirth follows death. Basil incorporates Paul's statement that *you were buried with him in baptism* [Col. 2:12; cf. Rom. 6:4] writing, "The bodies of those being baptized are buried in the water."[111] Baptism is a turn from being "dead in sin" [cf. Eph. 1–2] to receiving life-giving power from the Spirit [cf. 2 Cor. 3:6]. Basil interprets Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in light of Romans 6:5-12, insisting that baptism is the occasion for the believer to die to his former life and put on new life in Christ through the power of the Spirit. This new life begins with the gift of the Spirit, the Giver of Life. The threefold immersion in the rite illustrates the presence of all three Persons of the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit.

Basil explains that it is the Spirit himself who activates the new life in the believer. It is not that the Spirit alters the nature of the water, and the water then becomes a source of life, but that the Spirit is present bestowing spiritual gifts.

> If there is any grace in the water, it does not come from the nature of the water, but from the Spirit's presence, since baptism is not a removal of dirt from the body, but an appeal to God for a clear conscience [cf. 1 Pet. 3:21]. . . . Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to Paradise, our ascension to the Kingdom of heaven, our adoption as God's sons [cf. Rom. 8:14-16], our freedom to call God

110. *Spir.* 15.35.40–60 (SC 17:368; Anderson: 58–59).

111. Ibid., 15.35.28–29 (SC 17:366; Anderson: 58).

> our Father, our becoming partakers of the grace of Christ, being called *children of light* [Eph. 5:8], sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our inheritance of the fullness of blessing, both in this world and the world to come.[112]

It is the Spirit operative in the believer who makes the gifts of God effective; the Spirit completes salvation. Basil points out, among the many gifts, the spiritual effect of being "enlightened with divine knowledge" in the former quote (*Spir.* 15.35.60), and "called children of light" in the latter. The Spirit brings the power of illumination to the baptized, and this illumination is the power to understand divine things and to reflect the light of God to the world.

There are then wide-ranging gifts given by the Spirit of God at the moment of baptism. These are palpable experiences of the power of the Holy Spirit, and inherent in Basil's argument is the claim that any baptized Christian should be able to discuss the experience of baptism in much the same terms as Basil has discussed his. The role of the Spirit in baptism is not simply as the third name recited to invoke the presence of God. The Spirit is active in baptism in ways that should be manifest in the initiate. The Christian experiences a moral regeneration, to be certain, but the emphasis in Basil, as in Origen before him,[113] is on the experience of illumination and the ability to contemplate and discern the mysteries of God—the gift of knowledge that makes worship possible.

Knowledge of God the Father and Jesus the Son are possible only through the activity of the Holy Spirit, as Basil writes:

> I swear to every man who confesses Christ but denies the Father: Christ will profit him nothing. If a man calls upon God, but rejects the Son, his faith is empty. If someone rejects the Spirit, his faith in the Father and the Son is made useless; it is impossible to believe in the Father and the Son without the presence of the Spirit. He who rejects the Spirit rejects the Son, and he who rejects the Son rejects the Father. *No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit,* [1 Cor. 12:3] and *No one has ever seen God; the Only-Begotten God, who*

112. Ibid., 15.35.60–63, 15.36.1–7 (SC 17:368–70; Anderson: 59).

113. "This epiclesis is the invocation 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' which causes the water to share in 'the power of the Holy Trinity' and confers upon it 'an ethical and contemplative virtue,' (*Fragment of Commentary on John* 36) giving the grace to live as a Christian and to contemplate God and his mysteries." Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 225.

> *is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known* [John 1:18]. Such a person has no part in true worship. It is impossible to worship the Son except in the Holy Spirit; it is impossible to call upon the Father except in the *Spirit of adoption* [Rom. 8:15].[114]

It is impossible to worship without the Spirit, Basil concludes, because it is only in the Spirit that one gains the knowledge of God proper to worship, the knowledge of God that provides a foundation and basis for worship. This is the sort of knowledge that Basil is tying to the experience of illumination by the Spirit at baptism. Basil discusses the qualities of this illumination later in his treatise.

> If we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of *the image of the invisible God* [Col. 1:15], and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source, it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge. He gives those who love the vision of truth the power which enables them to gain the image in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ]. He does not reveal it to them from outside sources, but leads them to knowledge in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ], *No one knows the Father except the Son* [Matt. 11:27], and *No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit* [1 Cor. 12:3]. Notice that it does not say "through" the Spirit, but "in" the Spirit. It also says, *God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth* [John 4:24], and *in Your light do we see light* [Ps. 36:9], through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, *the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world* [John 1:9]. He reveals the glory of the Only-Begotten in himself, and he gives true worshippers the knowledge of God in himself.[115]

A Christian must be brought into the Spirit, as if into a place or as if into the light. It is only in the Spirit that true worship can occur. Basil stakes his claim here that only God can truly know God and so only God can truly worship God. To worship God in spirit and in truth essentially means to be drawn into God, to participate in the divine life itself. This is what it means for Basil to be "in the Spirit." It means being inseparably joined to the Spirit by the Spirit. Basil makes the exegetical claim that John 1:9 is not referring to the Word, but to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the light, just as the Word is the light. In this

114. *Spir.* 11.27.20–34 (SC 17:342; Anderson: 48).

115. Ibid., 18.47.1–17 (SC 17:412).

recurrence of the light metaphor, we are reminded of the Nicene statement, "Light from Light," and also of Basil and Eustathius's statement of agreement examined above (*Ep.* 125). Basil here extends the accepted Nicene metaphor of light to the Spirit as well.

In this vein, we can understand the Scripture cluster that Basil has assembled. Worship is directed toward the Father, but no one knows the Father but the Son [Matt. 11:27], therefore the Son is necessary for proper worship. But no one can make the right claim about the Son unless empowered by the Spirit [1 Cor. 12:3], so the Spirit is necessary for proper worship. If God is Spirit, and it is incumbent upon Christians to worship "in spirit," then it is necessary in some sense to be in God to worship God [John 4:24], which makes sense to Basil because it is like experiencing illumination—standing in light and recognizing light as the psalm says, *in your light we see light* [Ps. 36:9]. To worship, one must have the knowledge of God; and to have this knowledge one must be in the Spirit. The whole church, then, inasmuch as it is the church at all—that is, the body that worships God—exists inside the Holy Spirit.[116] This is what it means to be illumined by the Spirit of God.

So then the metaphor of light from light employed by the fathers of Nicea does not end with the Father and the Son;[117] Basil argues that illumination by the Spirit is the experience of being drawn into the divine light of the Trinity. He continues,

> The way to divine knowledge ascends from one Spirit through the one Son to the one Father. Likewise, natural goodness, inherent holiness and royal dignity reach from the Father through the Only-Begotten to the Spirit. Thus, we do not lose the true doctrine of one God by confessing the Persons. Those who teach subordination, and talk about first, second, and third, ought to realize that they are introducing erroneous Greek polytheism into pure Christian theology. . . . Subordination cannot be used to describe the communion of nature.[118]

116. Yet without any loss of individuality. In fact, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit who is simultaneously omnipresent and able to be present to the individual guarantees the retention of individuality in the redeemed and perfected, eternal Church. Vladimir Lossky, "Redemption and Deification," *Sobornost* 3 (1947): 55.

117. As Basil himself had done in *Against Eunomius*, when he first developed this exegesis of Psalm 36:9 arguing for the full divinity of the Son in an extended argument for the consubstantial light of the Father and the Son. *Eun.* 2.25–29 (SC 2:104–24).

118. *Spir.* 18.47.17–33 (SC 17:412–14).

Aware that he has made a statement that sounds too much like a progression up an ontological chain of being, Basil moves quickly to argue against subordinationism and for a communion of nature between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That this common divine nature can be compared to light is established in Basil's view by the practice of the fathers at Nicea, and in that metaphor of light the Spirit, who illumines the believer by drawing the believer into himself, is also divine light.

Toward the end of the treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil returns to his defense of the doxology that includes the phrase "in the Holy Spirit."[119] The Christian is given the power to worship by being drawn into the Spirit of God. This process is best described as divine illumination, and Basil offers his final summary comments on the power of illumination by the Spirit of God, its effects on the believer, and its consequences for Trinitarian Christian theology.

> To worship "in" the Spirit implies that our intelligence has been enlightened. Consider the words spoken to the Samaritan woman. She was deceived by local custom into believing that worship could only be offered in a specific place, but the Lord, attempting to correct her, said that worship ought to be offered in Spirit and in truth [cf. John 4:24]. By *truth* he clearly meant himself [cf. John 14:6]. If we say that worship offered "in" the Son the Truth is worship offered "in" the Father's image, we can say the same about worship offered "in" the Spirit since the Spirit in himself reveals the divinity of the Lord. The Holy Spirit cannot be divided from the Father and the Son in worship. If you remain outside the Spirit, you cannot worship at all, and if you are "in" him you cannot separate him from God.[120]

The Spirit draws the believer into himself, like the one who emerges into the light after dwelling among the shadows of the cave. The Christian must move into the Spirit by the illumination of the mind, and must behold the divinity of the Son and learn to worship God *in* the Holy Spirit. Basil continues to employ the metaphor of light to describe the activity of the Spirit.

> Light cannot be separated from what it makes visible, and it not possible to see *the image of the invisible God* [Col. 1:15] except in the illumination of the Spirit [ἐν τῷ φωτισμῷ τοῦ Πνεύματος]. Once you see the image, you cannot ignore the light; you see the light

119. Cf. ibid., 1.3.

120. Ibid., 26.64.3–15 (SC 17:476).

> and the image simultaneously. It is fitting that when we see Christ, the brightness of God's glory [cf. Heb. 1:3], it is always through the illumination of the Spirit.[121]

The community of nature between the Persons of the Trinity can be compared to light, and the believer participates in this light by being illumined by the Spirit at baptism. If worship is to happen at all as it has been laid out in the Christian Scriptures, Basil claims it can only happen as a product and participation in the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Without the illumination of the Spirit, there can be no knowledge of the Father or the Son, and no knowledge of their relationship; there can be no baptism and there can be no worship. Everything that it is to be a Christian hangs on a proper inclusion of the Spirit of God in the community of nature in the Holy Trinity:

> He is numbered with them in the baptismal formula, and we consider it necessary to combine their names in the same way when we profess our faith, and we treat the profession of faith as the origin and mother of the doxology.[122]

For Basil, Christian belief and practice is the result of the faith received at baptism. So Basil concludes, "What can they do now? Either they must teach us not to baptize in the manner we have been taught, or else not to believe as we were baptized, or not to worship as we believe."[123] Basil is so firmly set on the revelation of God in the baptismal formula and the experience of illumination experienced in the rite that he is confident his position can be defended on judgment day:

> And what have we prepared for our defense on the great Day of Judgment? I will say that we were led to glorify the Spirit because the Lord himself first honored him; he associated the Spirit with himself and the Father when he gave us the baptismal formula. Secondly, it was through this very initiation that we were introduced to the knowledge of God.[124]

121. Ibid., 26.64.15–22 (SC 17:476).
122. Ibid., 27.68.14–17 (SC 17:490; Anderson: 102).
123. Ibid., 27.68.17–20 (SC 17:490; Anderson: 102).
124. Ibid., 29.75.22–27 (SC 17:516; Anderson: 112).

Basil is confident that the worship of the Spirit, even if it turns out to be an error, will be defensible based on the fact that the Lord honored the Spirit by associating it with himself and the Father in the baptismal formula.

So, then, the illuminating work of the Spirit begins at baptism, regenerating the human being in his mind, instilling the possibility of knowledge of God. Divine illumination is the experience of the Spirit himself; and in this illumination the Father and the Son are also perceived. Revelation of God can only be accomplished by God, and as it is here accomplished by the Holy Spirit, Basil is arguing that the Holy Spirit is fully God. Basil's two arguments from baptism extend from tradition and from experience. From the tradition of the baptismal liturgy, and indeed from the baptismal command of Jesus at Matthew 28:19, Basil concludes that God alone is invoked at baptism in the single name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From the experience of divine illumination, Basil concludes that the Spirit is an illuminator who casts the divine light, making knowledge of God possible. There is no better picture of Basil's theology than the moment of threefold immersion in baptism. In the name of God, by the power of the Spirit, the divine light envelopes the believer and initiates a participation in the knowledge of God found only within the Trinity, creating a foundation for Christian confession and worship.

3

The Divine Light over Creation

Basil's doctrine of creation is another means that he used to argue for the divinity of the Holy Spirit on the grounds of the activities of the Holy Spirit as God, rather than by arguing about the nature of God's essence. As part of the continuing development of Christian thought on the nature of the created order and its meaning, Basil contributed a few small points of clarity that, as it turns out, opened up broad horizons for later thinkers in theology, philosophy, and the natural sciences.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that Basil's doctrine of creation made the claim that the Holy Spirit is God through three distinct moves. First, Basil clearly presented the claim that the entire creation was a closed system separated from God its Creator by an ontological divide. Second, Basil explored the distinction between time and eternity, challenging the assumption that God is bound to time as we are. He recognized that God is in eternity and creation in time, and declared that the Holy Spirit is not bound by time. Last, Basil expected a certain divine disclosure to be evident in the created order; he expected that knowledge of God would be available through the study of the natural world. However, he was also wary of what could now be called a natural theology. For Basil, knowledge of God derived from the natural order had to be mediated by the power of the Holy Spirit. God can only be known by God, and the Holy Spirit makes God known through creation when the Holy Spirit illumines the mind. Basil focuses primarily on the activity of the Spirit renewing the mind for knowledge of the created order, leaving little reference to the creative activity of the Son, even though he recognizes that all activities of God are products of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In these three major arguments, it is clear that Basil defines the boundaries of what is divine and what is not, and places the Holy Spirit on the side of the one true God who is disclosed through Trinitarian activities toward creation.

Basil was an important part of the emergence of a Christian doctrine of creation. He recognized that the doctrine of creation was not only the interplay of the omnipotent God with the material world, but the relationship between eternity and time. How does an eternal, timeless, and changeless deity work in time to generate the cosmos? The enduring problem that Basil identified in cosmologies contemporary to him was the notion that God was materially and ontologically tied to the universe. It was a notion that he associated with the Greek philosophers, and he grouped them all together as a common enemy despite the clear evidence that his thought was also nourished by their insights.

Philosophical notions of the cosmos as an emanation or overflow of being out of God had to be dismissed from Christian discourse. They left God ontologically tied to the universe in ways Basil could not abide. But the most important and critical insight of Basil, and the one that had the greatest sustained impact on Christian Trinitarian theology,[1] was his teaching that the divine act of creation is not a punctiliar act in time at the beginning, but an act of God sustained from beginning to end as one divine activity originating from outside of time itself. Creation is not something that happened at the beginning of time, it is the doctrine that God has established time and space for life as we know it from beginning to end, and this is what we call our cosmos. Basil expressed this notion most clearly when he assigned *teleiōsis*, or continuing perfection, as the manner in which the Holy Spirit participates in creation. Once it is understood that God enacts creation from a position of eternity as a holistic act from beginning to end, the role of Spirit as Perfecter is no longer marked with hints of subordinationism, but is a way of talking about a truly Trinitarian doctrine of creation.

Basil presents a particularly Trinitarian expression of the doctrine of creation that upholds the freedom of God, the "absolute ontological distinction"[2] between the Creator and the creation, and the fundamental integrity of the contingent order of the universe. He employs both cosmogony

1. Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 9.

2. Ibid., 67. Gunton is correct to use this type of language to describe the character of the divide between the Creator and the creation developed by Athanasius and the Cappadocians: "The ontological distinction which is here [in Athanasius] implied between the creator and the creation had the effect, as we saw that it had in Irenaeus, of removing the necessity for beings intermediate between God and the world. There is thus developed what we can call an absolute ontological distinction between creator and creation, but one based on God's free personal relation to the world through his Son. (This is to be preferred to the well-known and misleading expression, 'infinite qualitative difference,' which implies something rather different)." In Basil, the key moment is found in *Against Eunomius*: "Δύο γὰρ λεγομένων πραγμάτων, θεότητός τε καὶ κτίσεως." *Eun.* 3.2.18 (SC 2:152). Cf. 2.31.20–26.

and cosmology to demonstrate the continuing divine activity of the Holy Spirit as God. This chapter expounds upon Basil's exploration of the ineluctable time continuum stretched out between *archē* and *telos*, a continuum that is only escapable by its Creator. The Spirit is outside of this continuum. For Basil, it is absurd to suggest chronology within the Trinity—that is, outside of the created time continuum that makes chronology possible. His doctrine of the simplicity of God precludes thinking of the Creator as an ontological series. Basil does not say explicitly that the Spirit is the Creator, although he comes close. What follows is the preponderance of evidence drawn from Basil's theological system as a whole implying that the Spirit operates with cosmological significance from the position of the Creator, without ever using the word itself. Without saying the Spirit is God, Basil claims that the Spirit is outside of time, prior to *archē*, posterior to *telos*, governor of progress in perfection, an active participant in the self-disclosing energies of God, and makes the claim that the only thing in existence that occupies this position is the one true God. That is to say, Basil claims that the Holy Spirit is God.

Closing the Cosmos

The aim of the following section is to recognize the philosophical theories of cosmogony contemporary to Basil and to illustrate how he argues for a difference between a Christian doctrine of creation and any theory in which God is materially or ontologically bound to the universe. Basil communicated a Christian doctrine of creation in which the universe as we know it is closed. That is, there is no location in the universe where one might trip up on a god or traipse into the divine realm. The cosmos, from the smallest organism to the furthest star, is the creation of God who dwells in another realm entirely—on another ontological plane. It has been provided by God for distinct purposes, one of which is that we might study it aggressively and understand the world in which we live.

Plato's creator is the demiurge, the "Maker and Father of the Universe,"[3] who attempted to recapitulate the invisible world of forms into a material world, but was unable to fully actualize his own intentions. The Maker and Father of the Universe, was, in Plato, limited to doing his best and failed at attaining his goal; the invisible realm simply cannot be recapitulated in the visible cosmos. The demiurge creates by bringing order to disorder and form to chaos, but this disorder, formlessness, and chaos exist eternally alongside the Father and Maker of the Universe and thus impose limits on what can be

3. *Timaeus* 28C.

accomplished.[4] The universe does indeed have a beginning, an *archē*, for Plato.[5] This is to say that there is a principle of becoming, of coming into existence, located in divine activity. But this *archē* of creation by the demiurge, the *archē* of coming into being, is not a free act of creation out of nothing but the imposition of order over the preexistent but formless material of the universe. It is not God who creates, but "God geometrizes."[6] The *archē* in which Plato's Father and Maker of the Universe participates is a primary cause within a chain of causality, a first movement of time that exists within time, an ordering of an existent material universe that can only be claimed to have come into being if we understand "being" to mean "being in a form." Yes, Plato argues for an act of creation at the beginning, but God exists within and as a part of a system of definitive ordering principles, "principles still higher" that only "God and the man who is dear to God" can understand; principles to which Plato refers but cannot outline.[7] Subject to higher principles, God could only impose order and harmony on the universe at its beginning so far as the existent things were able to receive.[8] For this reason, the universe is not fully as it ought to be or fully as the Maker of All intended. The Creator was subject to certain limitations.

When Aristotle claimed, then, that all philosophers before him were agreed that the universe came into being, he was referring to the prevalence of Plato's conception of a principle of divine activity bringing the formless universe into form.[9] Aristotle resolved the tension between the universe as it is and the universe as it ought to be by refuting the existence of the latter. The universe is what it is, which is what it always has been and what it always will be; the principle of change may be instantiated as things move from what they are *potentially* toward what they are *actually*, but this does not speak to the question of eternal existence. Motion does not require that the universe is finite. Aristotle claims that motion is a constant in the universe that does not suggest the need for a beginning and an end: "There never was a time when there

4. *Timaeus* 50A–51B.

5. "We must first investigate whether [the Cosmos] has existed always, having no beginning of generation, or whether it has come into existence, having begun from some beginning. It has come into existence [πότερον ἦν ἀεί, γενέσεως ἀρχήν ἔχων οὐδεμίαν, ἢ γέγονεν, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τινὸς ἀρξάμενος. Γέγονεν]." 28B (LCL 234:50). Cf. Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann's, 2002), 181–85; Harry A. Wolfson, "Patristic Arguments against the Eternity of the World." *HTR* 59 (1966): 352.

6. R. G. Bury, trans., *Plato*, LCL 234 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989 [1929]), 13.

7. "Ἀρχὰς ἄνωθεν," *Timaeus* 53DE (LCL 234:128).

8. Ibid., 69B.

9. Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 1.10 (279B); *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. E. M. Forrster (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 463–65.

was not motion, and never will be a time when there will not be motion."[10] Although Aristotle considered his proposal different in kind from all those who had preceded him, those who countered the philosophy of the Greeks were not wrong to conflate the views and include them both among those who say that the world always existed. Aristotle's God is even more openly bound to the ontology of the cosmos that Plato's.

The convergence of the two views is demonstrated in Middle Platonism, where Platonic and Aristotelian thought underwent a process of distillation and synthesis by those who wished to modernize Plato by "appropriating from the Peripatetics and the Stoics such doctrines and formulations as seemed to them to express better what Plato had really meant to say."[11] The Pseudo-Aristotelian work *On the Universe*, for example, presents God as the highest of principles and greatest of powers present in the universe:

> He has himself obtained the first and highest place and is therefore called Supreme, dwelling, in the words of the poet, "on the topmost crest" [Homer, *Iliad* I 499] of the whole heaven; and the body which is nearest to him most enjoys his power, and afterwards the next nearest, and so on successively until the regions wherein we dwell are reached.[12]

So, for this author, the position of God in the universe is analogous to the "key stones in arches, which . . . ensure the balance and arrangement of the whole structure of the arch and give it stability . . . for [God] preserves the harmony and permanence of all things."[13] Even when these philosophers attempted to express a supreme being higher than the highest principles of order in the universe, they could not conceive of a God uniquely eternal, but as coeternal with the universe and consistently related to it, Alcinous's *Handbook of Platonism* being the quintessential example. Even with such a high theology and notion of a "primary god" who is "eternal, ineffable . . . divinity," nonetheless this supreme being is ontologically tied to the eternal universe.[14] In these thinkers, the term *archē*, beginning, becomes a trope for the relationship between the primary cause and the order of the universe.

10. *Physics* 8.1 (252B; Barnes: 421).

11. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London: Duckworth, 1977), xiv.

12. Ps.-Aristotle, *On the Universe* 6 (Barnes: 635).

13. *On the Universe* 6.

14. Alcinous, *Handbook (Didaskalikos)* 10.3. In John Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1993), 18.

For Plotinus, material existence is the result of an emanation from the supreme first principle, the One. As Andrew Louth points out, "This is not an explanation of the *origin* of the cosmos—for Plotinus the cosmos is eternal—it is an attempt to understand how things eternally are."[15] The One may be described as an *archē*, in Plotinus, because it is the beginning of all motion and origin of all existence,[16] but Plotinus struggles to define the One as indefinable beyond all human reason, beyond mind and being. For all his arguments to the contrary and his verbal insistences on the transcendence of the One, Plotinus still belongs to those who see the ultimate first principle as ontologically bound to the cosmos.[17]

The important point in all of these thinkers is the necessity imposed upon the Creator by their version of the act, origin, or nature of the creation. God was bound to create in a certain way in all of these systems and could not have done it any other way. The Creator, the Father and Maker, the One, the *Archē*, all of them are yet ontologically bound to the universe which they generate. Creation is understood as a necessary result, not a free act. There is ultimately no contingence, only necessity; no divine freedom, only divine nature. In a remark applied to Plotinus, but valid for all the preceding systems, Gerhard May writes:

> Nevertheless the Neo-Platonist cosmology is distinguished fundamentally in more than one aspect from Christian doctrine: matter does not originate by an act of creation in time but exists, like the whole cosmos, eternally; so its "having become" means only an ontological relationship, an eternal causality. But above all it is the thought, decisive for Christianity, of the freedom and contingency of the divine creation which is unacceptable to New Platonism.[18]

Christianity came to a doctrine of creation that refused all systems that might impinge upon the ultimate freedom and sovereignty of God to create a universe of God's own liking and intent without limitation, a universe created by God as God desires it that God may call "very good," a universe that could have

15. Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 39.

16. *Enneads* 5.5.10.

17. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol 4, ed. J. Riches, trans. B. McNeil, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 288.

18. Gerhard May, Creatio ex Nihilo*: The Doctrine of "Creation out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 5.

been different but was created as it is intentionally in the freedom of divine sovereignty.

This was not an immediate conclusion for Christian thought. Affiliation with the creation account in Genesis 1 did not necessarily mean abdicating the Hellenistic view of an eternal universe subject to the ordering powers of the Creator.[19] It was New Testament exegesis in the conflict with Gnosticism that ultimately produced the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, and it is in this conflict that the church fathers began to argue forcibly for a closed cosmos. Once a full understanding of the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is at hand, precursors can be found in earlier literature,[20] but without the Christian doctrine these precursors say little more than is found in the Psalms, Job, or Isaiah concerning the general relationship between God and the world, and do not exclude the possibility of preexisting matter.

Theophilus of Antioch made considerable progress in the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing,[21] but the first figure to work the idea out theologically was Irenaeus of Lyons. The body-soul dualism of the gnostics had attained such a pitch that there was no longer any concern for the material order and the creator of the material world was regarded as foolish, incompetent, and maleficent.[22] Marcion argued for the creation of the world by the maleficent Hebrew God out of eternal matter,[23] but most gnostic systems viewed the generation of matter as an aberrant and unintentional emanation from a truly spiritual world. Matter was accidental, and the universe a tragic disaster.[24] Gerhard May points out, however, that the gnostic "Basilides is the first

19. "There are good reasons for suggesting that the Old Testament, read on its own terms rather than in light of the New Testament, tends to affirm a doctrine of creation through the conquest of pre-existing chaotic forces or the ordering of pre-existent matter. The New Testament allows such accounts to be read in a different light." Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 144. In Philo of Alexandria, for example, we find: "There must be an active cause, and a passive subject; and . . . the active cause is the intellect of the universe, thoroughly unadulterated and thoroughly unmixed, superior to virtue and superior to science, superior even to abstract good or abstract beauty; while the passive subject is something inanimate and incapable of motion by any intrinsic power of its own, but having been set in motion, and fashioned, and endowed with life by the intellect, became transformed into that most perfect work, this world." Philo, *On the Creation of the World* 8–9, in C. D. Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993). Cf. May, Creatio, 9.

20. See, e.g. *1 Clement* 33.

21. May, Creatio, 156–63.

22. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. Robert Wilson (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987), 73–84.

23. May, Creatio, 56.

24. Ibid., 39–53.

Christian theologian known to us who speaks in the strict sense of a creation out of nothing."[25] Basilides taught that the supreme God created all things intentionally out of nothing.[26] The subsequent ordering of the cosmos under his gnostic speculation was, however, problematic. In response to his and other schools of gnostic thought, Irenaeus explored the doctrine of creation.

Irenaeus argues from the simplicity of God that no notion of emanation would suffice, nor could any emergence of a subsidiary divinity satisfy theology, be it archons or the Logos itself.[27] No, God created the world in freedom, just as he willed it to be: "He himself made all things freely just as he wished."[28] Irenaeus classes the activity of God in creation as separate from the activity of a man or a woman who fashions things by art and by craft out of what already exists. God is not so limited.

> To attribute the substance of created things to the power and will of him who is God of all is worthy both of credit and acceptance. It is also fitting and may be well said regarding such a belief, that *the things which are impossible with men are possible with God* [Luke 18:27]. While persons, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, God is prominently superior to humans on this point: that he himself called into being the substance of his creation when previously it had no existence.[29]

With this insight, Irenaeus marks a pointed turn in the development of the Christian doctrine of creation. God does not create, or make, or shape, in the same manner as human beings do. There is no correlation, no analogy, between the divine activity of creation and the human activity. What God does is unique and is contrary to the established patterns of the cosmos as we understand them. God is free to act with an unmitigated omnipotence as Creator. Colin Gunton recognizes the gravity of this turn when he writes, "It is at this place that there emerges into history the classic Christian ontology: that there are no degrees of being but two realities, God and everything else that he has made, the created

25. Ibid., 76.

26. According to Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.7–15; 10.10 (ANF 5).

27. May, Creatio, 166.

28. "Ipse omnia fecit libere et quemadmodum uoluit." *Against Heresies* 3.8.3 (SC 3.2:96). Here Irenaeus is explaining the meaning of the verse Psalm 33:6, *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth*. This verse continued to play a very important role in the development of a Trinitarian doctrine of creation in Basil.

29. "Attribuere enim substantiam eorum quae facta sunt uirtuti et uoluntati eius qui est omnium Deus et credibile et acceptabile et constans"*Against Heresies* 2.10.4 (SC 2.2:90).

order."[30] There was no matter, no material substrate, with which God was forced to contend with in his act of creation, but rather God "used his own will and power as matter,"[31] meaning that God created the matter himself out of nothing.[32] By drawing exegesis of Luke 18:27 into his account of the creation of the universe, Irenaeus introduced a clear statement of the absolute ontological distinction between God as Creator and all that exists as creation. Not only are the manners of activity different, but the essence, the being, are different as well.

Irenaeus's advance was also a statement about the relation between eternity and time. As the material order, all that exists, came out of nothing by the will of God as a free act of unmitigated divine omnipotence, it is also true that time itself was a creative act and therefore has its beginning in the will of God. Irenaeus argues for a new understanding of beginning, a new type of *archē*. In fact, his doctrine of creation can adequately be summed up in the following words: "For the Scriptures teach that this world was formed toward a perfect end by God, receiving a beginning in time."[33] Against those who claim an eternal cosmos, Irenaeus argues for a beginning to all that exists.

It is difficult to assess the impact of Lactantius on the doctrine of creation, as he was viewed as something of a fringe theological figure even in his own time. He was gifted at destroying the systems of the philosophers, but was little educated in the Christian Scriptures and quotes very few of them. Theology was primarily exegesis for the Fathers, which explains Jerome's opinion: "Lactantius has a flow of eloquence worthy of Tully: would that he had been as ready to teach our doctrines as he was to pull down those of others!"[34] Stanislas Giet notes some loose possible correspondences between Basil's *Hexaemeron* and the writings of Lactantius, but these are tendentious associations of ideas.[35]

30. Gunton, *Triune*, 54.

31. "Deus ex his quae non erant, quemadmodum uoluit, ea quae facta sunt ut essent omnia fecit, sua uoluntate et uirtute substantia usus" *Against Heresies* 2.10.2 (SC 2.2:88).

32. May, Creatio, 171.

33. "Quoniam autem mundus hic factus est ἀποτελεστικῶς a Deo, temporale initium accipiens, Scripturae nos docent." *Against Heresies* 2.28.3 (SC 2.2:276). The Greek ἀποτελεστικῶς should be taken to mean "toward a perfect end" (Cf. *Against Heresies* 4.38.3; 2.34.2–4). This fits with Irenaeus's overall theological program of perfection through time. May, Creatio, 173n141.

34. *Ep.* 58.10 (NPNF2, 6:302). This is the very quality that makes him a particularly interesting figure for posterity. He argues Christian claims using only philosophical sources, overcoming any sense of dichotomy between philosophy and theology and tacitly claiming that Christian thought is the sum of the wisdom of the world, not its abrogation.

35. Stanislas Giet, trans., *Basile de Césarée: Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, SC 26 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949), 161n1, 295n6, 335n1, 487n4. The only reference with any possible weight is the last one. Basil describes the human being as purposefully erect with its eyes looking toward heaven in contradistinction

What is interesting is that Lactantius, upon choosing to convert to Christianity, felt that the argument against the eternal cosmos was one of the most important apologetic arguments he could make for the supremacy of Christian belief over the philosophers.

Lactantius makes essentially two arguments against the eternity of the world. He claims that nothing is eternal in whole that suffers disintegration in any of its parts, and he argues that an eternal cosmos would have to be devoid of order. The first argument is rather straightforward. Lactantius writes,

> But Aristotle freed himself from labor and trouble, by saying that the world always existed, and therefore that the human race, and the other things that exist in it, had no beginning, but rather always were, and always would be. But when we see that each animal separately, which had no prior existence, begins to exist, and ceases to exist, it follows necessarily that the whole species must at some time have begun to exist, and must at some time cease because it had a beginning. For all things must necessarily exist in three periods of time—the past, the present, and the future. The beginning belongs to the past, existence to the present, dissolution to the future. And all these things are seen in the case of human beings individually: for we begin when we are born; and we exist while we live; and we cease when we die.[36]

The known universe is locked into the course of time, as are all human beings, and the course of time is a ravage to hopes for eternity. No human being exists eternally, but is born, lives, and dies. As human beings are part of the known

to the beasts who are built to look down to the earth (*Hex.* 9.2). This same argument is found in Lactantius's *Divine Institutes*, at the end of an extended argument about the creation of the cosmos and against the eternality of matter (*Div. Inst.* 2.19; PL 6, 345A). To Giet's observations, one must add the possible correspondence between "There is nothing, as I imagine, which was made on its own account; but whatever is made at all must necessarily be made for some purpose," (*Div. Inst.* 7.4; PL 6, 746B; ANF 7:198) and Basil's "There is not one plant without worth, not one without some use. . . . So, the charge you thought you had against the Creator has proved to be for you an additional cause for thankfulness" (*Hex.* 5.4; GCS: 75.9–76.2). Lactantius argues (answering Cicero's complaint about the existence of so many snakes) that God has placed both the good and the bad in the world so that we might grow in wisdom by learning to select the good and avoid the bad. Basil argues that there is nothing inherently bad, but that all things have a certain purpose once we have grown in knowledge enough to apply them properly. The resonance is found in that these are both arguments defending the existence of harmful elements in the created order.

36. *Divine Institutes* 2.11 (PL 6, 315A).

universe, not separate from it, then there is a part of the known universe that begins, deteriorates, and ends. Nothing that perishes in part lasts eternally as a whole. Or, as Lactantius himself states it in the positive, "It is understood that is as a whole mortal the members of which are mortal."[37]

The second argument pertains to the inherent rational order of the universe. Rationality, Lactantius claims, does not come about without purposeful deliberation. In Aristotle, a difference is supposed between an act and its deliberation. Therefore, a person may be judged not only for his actions but for his intentions, and punished differently for actions carried out with intent to do harm than for actions that do harm without intent.[38] Lactantius takes up this well-known Aristotelian argument for his defense of the origination of the world. If, as he takes from Aristotle, it is not possible for *ratio* to exist unless it is preceded by *consilio*, then the universe must have had a beginning and cannot be eternal. If it is eternal, then there was no preceding moment when deliberation could take place prior to the establishment of order, and the fact that the universe displays a certain order is beyond doubt in Lactantius's view.[39]

Basil found opponents in those who claimed that the world is eternal toward the end of the fourth century. When he began his series of sermons on the six days of creation, he felt compelled as a first priority to dispel all notions of an eternal cosmos because they put the material order on an ontological plane with God; they make the world equal to God and make God part of the world. When Moses wrote, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that God created the heavens and the earth, Basil claims Moses not only made it clear that this universe has a definite beginning in time, but Moses also understood that the definitive end of the universe was implied:

> Do not maintain the illusion of the existence of a world without beginning [ἄναρχον] and without end [ἀτελεύτητον]. *For this world as we see it is passing away* [1 Cor. 7:31]. *Heaven and earth will pass away* [Matt. 24:35]. That which is now given in brief as a foundational facet of the divinely inspired teachings is the preliminary proclamation of the doctrine concerning the projected end [συντελείας] and the reformation of the world: *In the beginning, God created* [Gen. 1:1]. It is absolutely necessary that things begun in

37. "Intelligitur id totum esse mortale, cujus membra sunt mortalia." *Divine Institutes* 7.1 (PL 6, 736A).

38. *Nichomachean Ethics* 3.1–6 (1109b–1115b; Barnes: 1752–61). Basil applies this ethical principle in his Canonical Letters to Amphilochius: *Ep.* 188, canon 8; *Ep.* 217, canons 54, 56, and 57.

39. *Divine Institutes* 7.3 (PL 6, 745A; ANF 7:404).

> time be also brought to completion in time. If they have a beginning in time, have no doubt about the end.[40]

Inherent in the beginning is the notion of the end; if something has begun in time it will also end in time, because all that exists in the created universe is contained by time. Basil argues for a beginning and an end to the known universe in contrast to those who claim its eternity.[41] He argues for a closed cosmology.

Basil is also making a play on the word "end," which has a dual meaning in both his language and ours. Robert Wilken writes, "Beginning also implies end, not only in the sense that the world will come to an end, but that its creation was directed to a 'useful end.'"[42] For Basil, inherent in the beginning of the world is that the universe has an end in time, but also that the universe has a purpose, an end-for-which, a goal and reason for existing. There is a twofold layering to Basil's use of the word *end*, demonstrating that the universe is both impermanent and endowed with purpose. This stratification of meaning allows Basil to escape the ancient Greek notion of circularity in time and the axiom that the end will be like the beginning. Origen was unable to loose himself from the gravity of this idea.[43] Basil stratifies the meaning of the word *end*, allowing him to discuss an end that is tied to its beginning but not constrained by it. It is not an end entirely defined by its beginning, but a projected end with an attendant reformation. The *archē* and the *telos* are alike in that they both serve to bracket the continuum of time within eternity (timelessness), but the end is not the same as the beginning. This end is the end of time, but there is another end that is the fulfillment of the purpose of creation in the first place. This is closer to Irenaeus than Lactantius, as will become more evident below. What is important now is to recognize just how large the idea of an eternal cosmos loomed over the thought of Basil, and how forcibly he felt he needed to argue against this notion as he addressed his congregation in Caesarea.

40. *Hex.* 1.3.11–15 (GCS: 6.8–15; Way: 7).

41. A principle that Eunomius of Cyzicus also accepts. Eunomius, *Apology* 23.

42. Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 142.

43. While Origen defends the notion that the universe was created with both a beginning and an end as a matter of accepted apostolic doctrine (*On First Principles* 1.pref.7), he presents as axiomatic the adage that "the end is always like the beginning" (*On First Principles* 1.6.2; GCS: 79.22). The rational conclusions drawn from this precept nourish charges of universalism among his opponents. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A & C Black, 1977), 473–74.

In his *Hexaemeron*, Basil offers a number of arguments against the eternity of the world, as Lactantius had. He argues from the principle that if a part suffers corruption and disintegration, the whole cannot be eternal. What good are the sciences, he asks, if those who pursue them cannot come to the simplest and most evident truth "that the whole of anything whatsoever, whose parts are subject to corruption and change, must also at some time submit to the same changes as its parts?"[44] It should be obvious to all, in his opinion, that nothing that perishes in part can be called eternal as a whole, but nevertheless many "have believed that this visible world is co-eternal with God, the Creator of all things."[45] Basil deconstructs such a view with his argument from corruption and disintegration. God dwells in eternity, which Basil calls "a certain state proper to transcendental powers greater than and prior to the genesis of the cosmos, the beyond-time [ὑπέρχρονος], the eternal [αἰωνία], the everlasting [ἀΐδιος]."[46] This is the divine eternity of God, where time is not an ineluctable continuum of past, present and future, but where God is present to all three simultaneously.

Within this eternity, God deliberates over creation, and out of this state comes everything that we know of the cosmos: "When at length it was necessary for this world also to be brought into existence, primarily as a place of training and a school for the souls of men, then was created a fit dwelling place for all things in general which are subject to birth and destruction."[47] God dwells in eternity, but creatures exist in time; this is the nature of the world. The created universe, by nature, is fitted with the passage of time:

> Adapted by nature to the world and to the animals and plants in it, the passage of time began, always pressing on and flowing past, and nowhere checking its course. In truth, is this not the nature of time, whose past has vanished, whose future is not yet at hand, and whose present escapes perception before it is known? Such also is the nature of all that has been made, either clearly growing or decaying, but possessing no evident state or stability. Therefore, it was proper for the bodies of animals and plants, bound, as it were, by force to a sort of current, and maintained in a motion which leads to birth

44. *Hex.* 1.3 (GCS: 7.4–6; Way: 7)

45. Ibid., 1.3 (GCS: 6.18–7.1; Way: 7)

46. Ibid., 1.5 (GCS: 8.19–9.2). Central to the beliefs of Arius, Aetius, and Eunomius, is the prospect of a time before everything (πρὸ πάντων) in which the Father begets the son. Eunomius *Apology* 12.11; 28.6–7; Williams, *Arius*, 189–90. Basil militates against the existence of such a time, arguing instead that God alone dwells in timelessness and chronology does not apply to the Trinity. See below.

47. *Hex.* 1.5 (GCS: 9.11–14; Way: 9).

> and corruption, to be possessed of the nature of time, which has the peculiar character natural to things which change.[48]

To exist in time is to be subject to the ineluctable currents of change: birth, growth, and decay. Such is the lot of anything tangible. If something has material existence at all, then it exists in time and is carried along in streams of constant flux toward ultimate disintegration; and "since the parts of the world are corruptible, the world as a whole is corruptible; and, since the world as a whole is corruptible, the world as a whole was created."[49] The honest spectator must admit that the things he sees in the world are altering constantly and moving toward their decay; some things even die and come to an end entirely. If any part of the world ends, then the world as a whole cannot be called eternal and so must have had a beginning. The death of a blade of grass, then, proves to Basil that the world was created by God.

One should not miss Basil's continuing arguments against Eunomius's doctrine of the begetting of the Son in this schema. Basil contends that change requires chronology, and an event such as the begetting of a Son that has a beginning is certainly a change. Therefore Eunomius introduces chronology into the eternity of God, with his imprecise references to a "when" prior to all things in which the Son is begotten of the Father. The only answer is fidelity to a doctrine (Origen's) of the eternal generation of the Son and of the Spirit in a timeless Trinity—not just an *anarchos* Trinity, but a *huperchronos* one as well. Time is the "peculiar character natural to things which change." The Trinity must be regarded as above and beyond time.

Next is an argument from the inherent rationality and order of the cosmos. It could be argued that the phenomenon of motion is itself the proof of a definite beginning to the universe, since anything that moves must be moved by something prior to it and there must be a first mover. However, there are others who point out the circularity of the motion of the heavenly bodies and suggest that their cycles demonstrate the possibility of eternal motion. Could circular motion be eternal since circles are without beginning and end? Basil contends that there is an inherent rationality to the circular movement of the heavenly bodies. If a circle exists, it must exist contingent upon some deliberate intent to create a circle. Even if it is impossible for us to perceive where the circle began, it is not necessary to conclude that the circle is eternal because "assuredly, he who drew it with a center and a certain radius truly began from some point."[50] A circle does not just fall together; actually it is quite difficult to

48. Ibid., (GCS: 9.14–10.2; Way: 9)

49. Wolfson, "Arguments," 361.

produce one. Basil argues from the existence of such order and design in the universe to the rational mind that must precede it with deliberate intent. One should not imagine or be led to conclude, then, "that the things which you see are without a beginning, and do not think, because the bodies moving in the heavens travel around in a circle and because the beginning of the circle is not easily discerned by our ordinary means of perception, that the nature of bodies moving in a circle is without a beginning."[51] Reason and deliberation must precede order in Basil's mind; so then the universe, if it is rationally ordered, must be created with intent and with a beginning.

> An appropriate beginning for one who intends to speak about the formation of the world is to place first in the narration the source of the orderly arrangement of visible things. For, the creation of the heavens and the earth must be handed down, not as having happened spontaneously, as some have imagined, but as having its origin from God.[52]

The known universe displays order. An ordered universe cannot be eternal because this would eliminate the possibility of rational deliberation prior to the imposition of order. If the universe were eternal, then there would be no before or after; there would be no time before its existence when a rational mind deliberated over its form and planned its perfection. The existence of a circle in the motion of the heavens proves, to Basil, that the universe was created with a plan and therefore has both a beginning in time and a rational Creator.

This theme is also explored in relation to the Aristotelian theory of technology, or the arts. Basil plays off of Aristotle's threefold classification of thought[53] to claim that there are three types of arts: creative arts, practical arts, and theoretical arts. The theoretical arts are noetic projects such as mathematics. The product of the art remains in the mind. Practical arts are actions in the body that are ends in themselves, such as dancing or playing music. Their purpose is in their practice and once the action is finished, nothing remains. But creative arts are those that leave a product behind, and this product reflects of the purposes of the creator. Such is the nature of the world in which we live, argues Basil. The world in which we live has a purpose: "The world is a work of art, set before all for contemplation, so that through it the wisdom of him who created

50. *Hex.* 1.3 (GCS: 6.5–6; Way: 7).

51. Ibid. (GCS: 5.19–6.1; Way: 6).

52. Ibid., 1.1 (GCS: 1.7–10; Way: 3).

53. "All thought is either practical or productive or theoretical." *Metaphysics* 6.1 (1025b; Barnes: 1619).

it should be known."[54] The Creator of the universe is portrayed by Moses as "all but pervading the substance of the universe, harmonizing the individual parts with each other, and bringing to perfection a whole, consistent with itself, consonant, and harmonious."[55] The Creator is the artist of the cosmos. The balance, proportion, and beauty of the creation disclose the existence of the Creator and the deliberation behind his art. In this instance, Basil employs Aristotle's own theories as a defense of the rational order of the universe that implies a deliberate act on the part of the Creator. If both Creator and creation are eternal, then there is no occasion for this deliberate act.

For Basil, to profess that the universe is eternal is to make the universe coequal with God, which seems to him to impose constraints upon God. In the first sermon of the *Hexaemeron*, Basil includes this argument alongside the argument of the corruption of the part and the whole. He argues that "they attribute to a circumscribed world which possesses a material body the same glory as to the limitless and invisible nature," because "some have declared that heaven is co-existent with God from eternity; others, that it [i.e., heaven] is God himself without beginning and without end, and that it is responsible for the arrangement of every individual thing."[56] Basil recognizes that to claim the eternity of the cosmos is to relate the cosmos to God eternally and therefore to put them on an equal ontological plane. Toward the end of the sermon, he returns to the point:

> Inasmuch as many of those who have imagined that the world from eternity co-existed with God did not concede that it was made by him, but that, being, as it were, a shadow of his power, it existed of itself coordinately with him, and inasmuch as they admit that God is the cause of it, but involuntarily a cause, as the body is the cause of the shadow and the flashing light the cause of the brilliance, therefore, the prophet in correcting such an error used exactness in his words, saying: *In the beginning God created* [Gen. 1:1].[57]

Those who claim that the known world is an emanation or natural outpouring of God have rendered God the involuntary cause of existence. The universe and God are bipolar and coequal eternal beings in such a theory. They may be

54. *Hex.* 1.7 (GCS: 12.16–18; Way: 11–12).

55. Ibid., 1.7 (GCS: 13.8–11; Way: 12–13).

56. Ibid., 1.3 (GCS: 7.1–10; Way: 7–8).

57. Ibid., 1.7 (GCS: 12.20–13.6; Way: 12). Gregory of Nazianzus follows Basil in this charge against viewing creation as an emanation of God. *Oration* 29.2.

eternally related to one another as cause and effect, but they are on the same ontological plane.[58]

At this point it is appropriate to pause and imagine Basil's possible opponents in this argument. Certainly Aristotle must be listed, who claimed that "the heaven as a whole neither came into being nor admits of destruction, as some assert, but is one and eternal, with no end or beginning of its total duration, containing and embracing in itself the infinity of time."[59] Basil could have been aware of how Philo of Alexandria had explored the universe as a product of God, like a shadow.[60] He may have also known of the gnostic explorations of creation as an involuntary emanation, or shadow, of the demiurge.[61] Plotinus is also a likely mark. His theory of universal unity claimed that all that exists is eternally ontologically dependent upon the highest principle, as we have seen, and that the universe exists as a natural emanation of that first and highest principle. But Basil also seems to be entering an argument over the meaning of one of Origen's most curious claims. Origen argued from the simplicity and constancy of God that the scriptural titles of God are eternal; so then, God is always Father, always Benefactor, always Creator:

> We can therefore imagine no moment whatever when that power [the beneficent Father] was not engaged in acts of well-doing. Whence it follows that there always existed objects for this well-doing, namely, God's works or creatures, and that God, in the power of his providence, was always dispensing his blessings among them by doing them good in accordance with their condition and deserts. It follows plainly from this, that at no time whatever was God not Creator, nor Benefactor, nor Providence.[62]

58. The rejection of this is an important Christian principle, not entirely unique to Basil, but also not universally confessed in his time. Karl Barth puts it this way: "If the created world were also eternal, it would in fact be a second god. And in that case it would not be a suitable field for the free, creative acts of God or the corresponding movements of His creatures. Time is the form of the created world by which the world is ordained to be the field for the acts of God and for the corresponding reactions of His creatures, or, in more general terms, for creaturely life." *Church Dogmatics* III.2, *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley, trans. Harold Knight, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960), 438.

59. *On the Heavens* 2.1 (283b; Barnes: 470).

60. *Allegorical Interpretations* 3.33.

61. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 73.

62. *On First Principles* 1.4.3 (GCS: 66.8–14; Butterworth: 42). This passage is omitted in many editions of Origen's work, but included in the most accurate critical edition of Paul Koetschau and included in Butterworth's translation on those grounds. T. F. Torrance follows Athanasius in attempting to rescue

In this passage, Origen is setting up his doctrine of eternal generation rather than arguing for any sort of eternal cosmos, but his followers and critics claimed that because there must have always been recipients of the actions implied by the titles of God, Origen taught that the world is eternal.[63] Basil presses more distinctly here for an absolute ontological distinction between God and what God has created.[64] The first cause cannot be considered a part of the order itself. The cause of existence stands distinct from existence and prior to it. "The thing itself did not provide the cause of its existence," argues Basil, "but he created, as one good, something useful; as one wise, something beautiful; as one powerful, something mighty."[65] The cause cannot be inherent in the order of the universe, but must be prior, exterior, and ontologically distinct. For Basil, this is what Moses meant by "created." And in making this claim, Basil walks boldly out from under the shadow of one of his most revered predecessors—Origen.

While many had preceded Basil in commenting on the six days of creation, particularly Philo, Theophilus of Antioch, and Origen,[66] none of these efforts carried the impact of Basil's nine-sermon series, which endures as "one of the most beautiful and polished literary works of Christian antiquity, a quintessential example of the rhetorical skills of a mature, experienced orator in the golden age of patristic literature."[67] Gregory of Nyssa picked up the

this theology from its false consequences by considering the attributes of providence and creative power subsets of the Fatherhood of God: "God is always Father, but he is not always Creator, for in his creative activity God has to do with what is 'external' to his Being, freely giving existence to what did not exist before, and sustaining it by his will and grace in a creaturely coexistence with himself." T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 208.

63. Methodius of Olympus (d. 311) developed the argument against Origen on these grounds, claiming that this teaching implied an eternal and coexistent cosmos. *On Creation* 6 (GCS: 497). Cf. Lloyd Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 208–12; Williams, *Arius*, 168-71; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

64. Here, as elsewhere, Basil is not so much reacting against Origen as he is reacting against Methodius of Olympus and other critics of Origen's thought. There is a great deal of explanatory power in Brooks Otis's theory that the Cappadocian project is about restoring the theological system of Origen in a new context "without involving its heretical consequences." Basil seems heavily engaged in the battle over which of the two Origens will be retained in the church and its theology, the Origen of Methodius or the Origen of Thaumaturgus. Otis writes, "The Cappadocian system is nothing less than a tremendous reworking of Methodius in the light of the Homoiousian theology." Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 98, 118.

65. "Οὐχὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ εἶναι παρέσχεν, ἀλλ' ἐποίησεν" *Hex.* 1.7 (GCS: 13.6–8; Way: 12).

66. Frank Robbins, "The Hexaemeral Literature" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1912), 24–41.

67. Wilken, *Spirit*, 138.

sermons and cast the arguments in metaphysical terms with much greater depth. Ambrose largely recapitulated Basil's work in his own *Hexaemeron* sermons, and Augustine consulted a Latin translation as he wrote his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* and *On Genesis against Manicheans*.[68] Perhaps the most profound impact was on John Philoponus, who drew heavily from Basil in his refutations of Aristotle against the eternity of the world. Philoponus absorbed from Basil's *Hexaemeron* the principle of universal ontological homogeneity of all creation; that is, the same laws that apply to stones and trees apply to the stars and the heavens because all that is not God is of a kind, by nature. On this foundation, Philoponus devised a universal system of physics that anticipated Galileo.[69] As Christopher Kaiser writes,

> Though the insight of Basil and the influence of his commentary have not always been properly credited, they are the foundation of . . . "the creationist tradition of Christianity," a tradition that was to last for 1,600 years and give birth to modern Western science and technology before it degenerated into pure naturalism.[70]

In the patristic arguments for a beginning and an end, none had more profound impact than the sermons of Basil.

The Spirit outside of the Cosmos

In a manner distinctive from much of ancient philosophy, Christians struggled to articulate a view of the Spirit outside of and related to creation. The same philosophers who postulated an eternal universe taught of an animating spirit within it. Some suggested that there was a soul that animates the world just as Aristotle taught that the soul animates our bodies, and is a part of them.[71] Middle Platonism began to explore the existence of three ultimate metaphysical principles, or *archai*, in the universe: the Principal God, Ideas, and Matter.[72]

68. George Dragas, "St. Basil the Great's Doctrine of Creation according to His *Hexaemeron*," Ἐκκλησία καὶ Θεολογία 3 (1982): 1098n6.

69. Gunton, *Triune*, 95–96; McGrath, *Nature*, 95–98; Christopher Kaiser, *Creational Theology and the History of Physical Science: The Creationist Tradition from Basil to Bohr*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 78 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 27–31.

70. Kaiser, *Creational*, 18.

71. Aristotle, discussing self-initiated motion, writes, "Now if this can occur in an animal, why should not the same be true also of the universe as a whole? If it can occur in a small world it could also occur in a great one; and if it can occur in the world, it could also occur in the infinite." *Physics* 8.2 (252B; Barnes: 422). Cf. *On the Soul* 2.2 (413a–414a; Barnes: 657–59).

The world is a "living thing"[73] for Alcinous and the Middle Platonists, and the "soul of the world"[74] is the source of its eternal motion.[75] There is an eternal soul infusing the world that causes its motion. In Plotinus, it is argued that the Worldsoul is omnipresent and permeates all things.[76] The view of an omnipresent soul that animates the material world was widely accepted in the ancient world.

This intellectual milieu put many questions before the Fathers, and primary among them was the relationship of the Holy Spirit with creation. Attending the debate over the eternity of the material world was the argument against a material and eternal spirit of creation. Where would the Spirit fall? Was it a thing made or a thing that makes? How could the Spirit interact with the world in a continuous and omnipresent way and not be a part of the world? And finally, does the Spirit operate in the absolute freedom of divine sovereignty, or is the Spirit limited?

It has already been pointed out that Irenaeus made a significant step forward in the Christian doctrine of creation by arguing for the absolute freedom of God, confessing the unmitigated omnipotence that allowed God to act in total freedom in establishing the world. Irenaeus includes the Spirit and the Son in the sovereign freedom of God in the act of creation in his famous doctrine of the "two hands." It is not possible to know God, for "the Father cannot be measured," Irenaeus writes, but by God's love "when we obey him, we do always learn that there is so great a God, and that it is he who by himself has established, and selected, and adorned, and contains all things; and among the all things, both ourselves and this our world." Irenaeus continues:

> It was not angels, therefore, who made us . . . nor any power. . . . For God did not stand in need of these in order to accomplish what he had himself determined with himself beforehand should be done, as if he did not possess his own hands. For with him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, he made all things, to whom also he speaks, saying, *Let us make man after our image and likeness* [Gen. 1:26]. He taking from himself the substance of the creatures,

72. Following Plato, *Timaeus* 28A–29D. Henning Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 46–47.

73. *Handbook* 14.4 (Dillon: 24).

74. Ibid., 14.3–4 (Dillon: 23–24).

75. Ibid., 25.4 (Dillon: 33–34).

76. *Enneads* 5.5.9. See also 2.9.1 and 2.9.3.

> and the pattern of things made, and the type of all the adornments in the world. Truly, then, the Scripture declared, *First of all believe that there is one God, who has established all things, and completed them, and having caused that from what had no being, all things should come into existence*.[77]

While there is much to draw from this poignant text, the important point is that the Spirit is a part of the absolute divine freedom of God in creation. The Spirit, as a hand of God, is not a thing made or part of the created order, but is a co-Creator with the Father and the Son of all that is created. As Gerhard May writes, "God created everything through his 'hands,' Word and Wisdom, that is, through the Son and the Spirit. God's creation is absolutely free and unconditional. . . . God in his creative activity is bound by no ontological conditions; the sole ground for the origin of all being is his sovereign will."[78] The Spirit, too, operates in the sovereignty of divine freedom.

Origen argues against calling the Spirit created or made: "We have been able to find no passage in the Holy Scriptures which would warrant us in saying that the Holy Spirit was a being made or created."[79] In book 1 of *On First Principles*, Origen quotes the same passage from the *Shepherd* as Irenaeus and asserts that "all things were created by God, and that there is no creature which exists but has derived from him its being."[80] However, Origen also leaves a problematic bequest to the history of theology in his doctrine of the eternal titles of God. Detractors, such as Methodius, were able to represent Origen's theology as one that locates the Spirit within a system of ontological mediation between the Creator and the creation.[81] Origen's presentation therefore threatens something of the absolute divine freedom expressed by Irenaeus, particularly after its weaknesses are accentuated by his detractors. God appears compromised in some sense, bound to be Creator and tied to creation in

77. Irenaeus quotes as Scripture the *Shepherd of Hermas* 2.1. *Against Heresies* 4.20.1–2 (SC 4.2:625–29; ANF 1:969–70), translation altered.

78. May, *Creatio*, 168–69.

79. *On First Principles* 1.3.3 (GCS: 51.9–11; Butterworth: 31). Cf. Robert Louis Wilken, "*Spiritus sanctus secundum scripturas sanctas*: Exegetical Considerations of Augustine on the Holy Spirit" *Augustinian Studies* 31 (2000): 6.

80. *On First Principles* 1.3.3 (GCS: 50.14–15; Butterworth: 30). Origen is certain that Scripture refutes and rejects the existence of either "matter which is co-eternal with God, or that there are unbegotten souls, in whom they would have it that God implanted not so much the principle of existence as the quality and rank of their life." *On First Principles* 1.3.3 (GCS: 51.1–4; Butterworth: 30).

81. Patterson, *Methodius*, 208–12.

a manner not found in Irenaeus,[82] and the distinction between Creator and creature is not as sharp in Origen as it becomes in Athanasius and Basil.[83]

Origen seems at moments to hold to an ontological subordination in the Trinity, as when he writes concerning the rank and order of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

> The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells within the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being.[84]

Included in the rank and order of *being* is rank and order of *power*, and rank and order of *activity*. The Father and the Son work within the whole world, but the Holy Spirit works only among the saints.[85] In Origen's exegesis of Psalm 104:29–30, he claims that the Holy Spirit only works in those who have become renewed earth by being born again and proven themselves worthy of the Spirit's involvement in their lives, "because he will dwell not in all men, nor in those who are flesh, but in those whose *earth has been renewed*."[86] So then, the work of the Spirit does not reach the whole world, in Origen's view. The "power

82. Torrance, *Doctrine*, 207–9.

83. Alkuin Heising argues that because the distinction between Creator and creation was not as clear, Origen did not distinguish carefully enough between the Holy Spirit and spiritual beings, including angels. This distinction had to be developed more clearly by Basil, who staked the claim by arguing that the angels receive sanctification from the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to be freed from the body to be holy, but holiness must be added by God even to spiritual beings. The sanctification of the angels was Basil's proof that the distinction between Creator and creation applies to the spiritual realms. Alkuin Heising. "Der hl. Geist und die Hieligung der Engel in der Pneumatologie des Basilius von Cäsarea," *Zeitschrift für Katholischen Theologie* 87 (1965): 257–308.

84. *On First Principles* 1.3.5 (GCS: 55.4–56.8; Butterworth: 33–34). What was noted in chapter 1 applies again here: that it is impossible to ascertain whether this is the actual opinion of Origen or the view Rufinus added to Origen's writings to fit Origen into his own view of orthodoxy.

85. Ibid., 1.3.5; 1.3.7.

86. *When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.* Psalm 104:29–30. Origen, *On First Principles* 1.3.7 (GCS: 58.17–19; Butterworth: 36). Although exegeted differently by Basil, it is significant that the cluster of critical verses is the same in Origen. Of particular importance are

of God the Father and God the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saints alone."[87] Origen's ontological mediation between God the Father and the world leaves the Spirit limited in power, and opens the door for some to later claim that there is an ultimate separation between the supreme God and the lesser divinity of the Spirit—a claim that would not have been allowed by Origen himself, for he makes pains to declare "there is no separation in the Trinity,"[88] but nevertheless a claim that is a possible outgrowth of Origen's theology.

Athanasius worked to bolster the ultimate separation and freedom of the Spirit from the material world. In his reply to the troublesome Septuagintal Amos 4:13, "Therefore, behold, I am establishing the thunder and creating Spirit and announcing to men his Christ,"[89] Athanasius applies his understanding of Psalm 104:29-30. In the psalm, the Spirit is clearly the one who creates, not the one who is created. Therefore, Athanasius concludes,

> But if it is by the Spirit of God that we are renewed, then the spirit here [i.e., in Amos 4:13] said to be created is not the Holy Spirit but our spirit. . . . Know that the Holy Spirit is not created, but that it is our spirit which is renewed in him. Of this spirit David also prayed in the Psalm: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me* [Ps. 51:10].[90]

The Holy Spirit is not part of creation:

> That the Spirit is above the creation, distinct in nature from things originated, and proper to the Godhead, can be seen from the following consideration also. The Holy Spirit is incapable of change and alteration [ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον]. For it says, *The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit and will start away from thoughts that are without understanding* [Ws. 1:5]. And Peter says, *in the incurruptibility of the meek and quiet Spirit* [1 Pet. 3:4]. And again

the following: Psalm 33:6, Psalm 104:30, 1 Corinthians 2:10, and 1 Corinthians 12:3. Cf. *On First Principles* 1.3.5.

87. "A sanctis tantummodo" *On First Principles* 1.3.7 (GCS: 59.4–6; Butterworth: 36–37).

88. Ibid., 1.3.7 (GCS: 60.18; Butterworth: 38).

89. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 749. "Διότι ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στερεῶν βροντὴν καὶ κτίζων πνεῦμα καὶ ἀπαγγέλλων εἰς ἀνθρώπους τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ." Amos 4:13, LXX.

90. *Letters to Serapion on the Spirit* 1.9 (PG 26, 548B; Shapland: 82–83).

> in Wisdom, *Thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things* [12:1]. And if *none knoweth the things of God save the Spirit of God which is in him* [1 Cor. 2:11], and, as James said, in God *there is no variation nor shadow that is cast by turning* [1:17]—the Holy Spirit, being in God, must be incapable of change, variation, and corruption. But the nature of things originated and of things created is capable of change, inasmuch as it is outside the essence of God, and came into existence from that which is not.[91]

There is no way in Athanasius' sreading of this litany of Scriptures that the Spirit can be part of the created order by nature, which originated in time, decays, and will pass away. He argues further that there is an omnipresence to the Spirit that defies material nature: "The Spirit of the Lord fills the universe. Thus David sings: *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* [Ps. 139:7]. . . . Tthe Spirit fills all things, and in the Word is present in the midst of all things."[92] In Athanasius, the Spirit is associated so closely with the Word of God that it shares in the omnipresence of the Logos. Athanasius forcefully argues for an absolute distinction between the Creator and creation, and that the Spirit is to be regarded on the divine side of this distinction.

Basil picks up the debate in similar terms. In *Against Eunomius*, he places the Spirit squarely on the side of the Creator in the divide between God and the creation. Basil rails against Eunomius for suggesting that the Son was a creation of God,[93] but he rails against him equally for making the same claim against the Spirit:

> How much will he add to his blasphemy?! After disregarding the warning that the Lord extends in the Gospels to those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit [Cf. Matt. 12:31–32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10], which is as frightening as could be, Eunomius says that the Spirit is something that has been made [δημιούργημα], only barely granting the Spirit life since this designation for the most part applies to lifeless things.[94]

Basil considered there to be two ultimate categories of things that exist, "the divinity and the created order,"[95] that is, God and what God has created. This

91. Ibid., 1.26 (PG 26, 589C; Shapland: 129–130).

92. 1.27 (PG 26, 592BC; Shapland: 131). Cf. 3.4.

93. *Eun.* 2.32 (SC 2:132–36; cf. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz: 181).

94. *Eun.* 2.33.1–6 (SC 2:136).

claim is more significant for the history of Christian doctrine than it may, at first, appear. It was only through stringent argumentation that Athanasius, and then Basil, shifted the primary schism in the universe from the Platonic allegory of the line between *perceptibles* and *intelligibles* to the Judeo-Christian notion of an ontological distinction between Creator and creation.

So then, "In which class should we rank the Holy Spirit?"[96] The answer was clear for Basil even at this early stage:

> For the teaching transmitted by the Scripture sufficiently communicates to us that he is beyond the created order, since it is impossible for the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified to be of the same nature, as is the case for the one who teaches and those who are taught, and the one who reveals and those who are in need of revelation.[97]

For Basil, the activities of the Spirit hold the key. When the Scriptures are examined, they declare the activity of the Spirit as one who sanctifies, one who teaches, and one who reveals. These are all activities that flow from God toward the creation; they are acts originated in God and received in creation. The Spirit is in need of none of them. The Spirit receives none of them. In fact, the Spirit is part of their distribution.

In his later work, *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil argues the same point and further explores the dichotomy between what is sovereign and what is subservient only touched on in *Against Eunomius*.[98] Again, Basil claims that there is a simple divide in the universe between the Creator and the creation, and adds the further point that this divide is also a divide between divine sovereignty and a subservient order: "Either he [the Holy Spirit] is a creature and therefore a slave . . . or else he is above creation and shares in the kingship."[99] The Spirit cannot be called a slave, in Basil's estimation. He correlates two texts to prove his point:

> Are we to regard the Spirit as an instrument, a servant to be ranked with other creatures, a fellow slave? Or should even the slightest whisper of this blasphemy grieve pious ears? Do you call the Spirit a slave? But *the slave does not know what his master is doing* [John 15:15],

95. "Δύο γὰρ λεγομένων πραγμάτων, θεότητός τε καὶ κτίσεως." *Eun.* 3.2.18 (SC 2:152).
96. Ibid., 3.2.21–22 (SC 2:152).
97. Ibid., 3.6.28–32 (SC 2:168).
98. Ibid., 2.31.20–23 (SC 2:128).
99. *Spir.* 20.51.48–50 (SC 17:430).

> and, *What person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God* [1 Cor. 2:11].[100]

The Spirit cannot be a slave in relation to God the Father, because servants do not know the mind of their masters, but the Spirit knows the mind of God. But all that is in creation is in slavery when compared to the ultimate divine freedom of God. Basil writes, "Even though one man is called a master, and another a servant, all are held in equal honor before one another; as the possessions of our Maker, we all share the rank of slave."[101] In this way, Basil is making the argument—an argument made only in negative terms, but an argument nonetheless—that the Spirit is outside of creation in the sense of not having been fashioned or made, and that this means that the Spirit is free. The Spirit operates in the absolute freedom of divine sovereignty.

It is only in this understanding of divine freedom that Basil is able to articulate the freedom of God to operate as a Trinity, and he sets up the formula for Trinitarian activity that becomes a cornerstone of Cappadocian theology: "When you consider creation I advise you to first think of him who is the first cause of everything that exists: namely, the Father, and then of the Son, who is the creator, and then the Holy Spirit, the perfecter."[102] Basil makes the claim that God is known only by the disclosure granted in divine activities, and all activities from God are worked out by all three persons of the Trinity cooperatively, while simultaneously revealing some individualizing characteristics. The Father is the source, the Son the power, the Spirit the completion of any divine activity—that is, of any overture of divine disclosure extended from God to humanity. This is Basil's chief contribution to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of Trinitarian activity.[103] Gregory of Nazianzus would carry on this theological legacy,[104] as

100. Ibid., 19.50.19–25 (SC 17:424; Anderson: 79).

101. Ibid., 20.51.27–30 (SC 17:428).

102. Ibid., 16.38.13–15 (SC 17:376–78; Anderson: 62). See also (Basil/Gregory of Nyssa) *Ep.* 38.4.76–83 (Courtonne 1:86–87): "For neither could the One who is eternally in the Father [i.e., the Son] possibly be cut off from the Father, nor could he be separated from his own Spirit in whom he is accomplishing all [ἐνεργῶν]. In the same way the one who accepts the Father in effect accepts along with him the Son and the Spirit as well. For it is impossible in any manner to conceive of a severance or separation [τομὴν ἢ διαίρεσιν], as if to conceive of the Son apart from the Father; or to part the Son and his Spirit." The Father, Son, and Spirit, cannot be separated from one another because their activity (ἐνέργεια) is unified, and we only know God by his activities. For an indication that this threefold operation of God is found *in limine* in Athanasius, see: C. R. B. Shapland, trans., *The Letters of Saint Athanasius concerning the Holy Spirit* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 37.

would Gregory of Nyssa, who writes in his letter to Ablablius, *On Not Three Gods*, the power of God the Trinity "issues from the Father, as from a spring . . . is actualized by the Son; and its grace is perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit,"[105] demonstrating an absolute unity of action but upholding a differentiation of the persons in their respective roles. The language of unified but differentiated Trinitarian activity is the most critical contribution of Cappadocian thought to the history of Christian thought, and there is no question that this language begins with Basil in his reaction against Eunomius.

Pia Luislampe is justified making her claim that Basil paved the way for the confession of Constantinople that the Spirit is the Lord, the Giver of Life when she writes, "The step from Nicaea, in which the Holy Spirit was mentioned only briefly, to Constantinople, which calls the Holy Spirit the *Lord and Giver of Life*, was prepared for in a crucial way by Basil."[106] The fact that the activity of

103. This is much more important than the so-called Cappadocian settlement (μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις) which is not found in the Cappadocians' writings in such simplistic fashion and must be considered a subsidiary derivation of the doctrine of Trinitarian activity found first in Basil, and developed with force in Gregory of Nyssa. Joseph T. Leinhard, "*Ousia* and *Hypostasis*: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One *Hypostasis*,'" in *The Trinity*, ed. S. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99–121. Michel Barnes suggests that this causality sequence derived from Aetius's study of the medical philosopher Galen and came to Basil through Eunomius. The consistent point in all (Basil, Eunomius, Aetius, and Galen) is that the chain of causality reveals something of the actor: "The sequence also serves as a means for knowing what exists. Products are the signs of certain powers, and each product comes from a specific activity. If one knows the product, one can reason to the power. The causal sequence is thus also an epistemological sequence that describes degrees of knowability." Michel Barnes, "The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language" in *Arianism after Arius*, ed. M. Barnes and D. Williams (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 227; cf. Michel Barnes, *The Power of God:* Δύναμις *in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 173–259. Barnes unpacks the doctrine with respect to the differences between Eunomius's theory of causality and the theory of Trinitarian activity that eventually prevailed within the church. His work is more deeply penetrating than any, but he gives little credit to Basil. See e.g., Barnes, *Power*, 255n121.

104. *Oration* 38.9 (PG 36, 320C).

105. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Not Three Gods,* (Richardson: 17). Henry Barclay Swete concludes, "It may be doubted whether any subsequent writer, in East or West, has approached nearer to a satisfactory statement of the relation which, according to the laws of human thought, the Divine Persons may be conceived to hold towards one another." Nonetheless, it is clear that Gregory derived this theory from his older brother. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 250–52, 379.

106. "Der Schritt von Nicaea, das den Heiligen Geist nur kurz erwähnt hatte, bis zu Konstantinopel, das den Heiligen Geist als *Herrn und Lebensspender* bezeichnet, ist von Basilius in entscheidender Weise mit vorbereitet worden." Pia Luislampe, Spiritus Vivificans*: Grundzüge einer Theologie des Heiligen Geistes nach Basilius von Caesarea* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981), 62.

the Spirit is categorized by Basil under the term completion (τελείωσις) is not an indication of a subsidiary role for the Spirit in Basil's Trinitarian theology, but simply differentiates the role of the Spirit from that of the Father and the Son in the divine act of Creation: "It is clear that the entire work of Creation is a Trinitarian activity, but the Holy Spirit is [in particular] the medium, *in* it the Creator becomes present in the creature."[107] In Luislampe's interpretation, Basil was not distinguishing the activity of the Spirit as lesser, or limited, but as particular to the Spirit in relation with the Father and the Son. The Spirit is not tied to the world in any type of necessity; the Trinity is not an ontological mediation or chain of being but the free activity of God. God in three Persons, Father, Son, *and* Holy Spirit, is outside of the closed order of the created cosmos.

Basil and the *Spiritus Creator*

Basil's theology includes the Spirit in the divine act of creation and gives the Spirit a divine role in the continuous sustaining of the created order. It is a Trinitarian doctrine of creation. For Basil the Trinitarian operation of God is a choice made by God in the absolute sovereignty of divine freedom. In that sense, there is no necessity pressing God to be three, but there is a revealed intention of God to be known in three persons. Basil writes,

> And let no one accuse me of saying that there are three unoriginate persons, or that the work of the Son is imperfect. The Originator of all things is One: he creates through the Son and perfects through the Spirit. The Father's work is in no way imperfect, since he accomplishes all in all, nor is the Son's work deficient if it is not completed [τελειοῦν] by the Spirit. The Father creates through his will alone and does not need the Son, yet chooses to work through the Son. Likewise the Son works as the Father's likeness, and needs no other cooperation, but he chooses to have his work completed through the Spirit. *By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the Spirit of his mouth* [Ps. 33:6]. The Word is not merely air set in motion by the organs of speech, nor is the Spirit of his mouth an exhalation of the lungs, but the Word is he who was with God in the beginning, *and was God* [John 1:1], and the Spirit of God's mouth is the *Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father* [John

107. "Das gesamte Schöpfungswirken ist trinitarisch bestimmt, aber der Heilige Geist ist das Medium, *in* dem der Creator gegenwärtig wird in der Kreatur." Ibid., 62.

> 15:26]. Perceive these three: the Lord who commands, the Word who creates, and the Spirit who strengthens.[108]

Basil teaches that we know only what God has demonstrated. There is no necessity pressing God to be three. If there were, then we could understand the logic of this necessity and then understand the logic of the threeness of the solitary God. This knowledge is not available to us, however, because God is not three by logical necessity but in the absolute sovereignty of divine freedom. The Father has no need of the Son to accomplish the act of creation, but chooses to create through the Son. The Spirit is not needed as a completer or perfecter of the work, as if it were deficient and in need of polishing up, but God chooses to operate through the Spirit as completer. Basil wishes to impress upon the reader, and upon Christian Trinitarian theology, that God is free from all necessity. In this section, Basil's theology of the Spirit's activity will be made clear. Basil's doctrine of the activity of the Spirit in creation, formulated in opposition to Eustathius and Eunomius, redeems the best of Origen's system and contributes the doctrine of the Spirit as Perfecter (*teleiōtikon*) as a defense of the full divinity of the Spirit as the third person of the Trinity.

In Basil, as in Irenaeus before him, the universe was not created static and perfect in the first instance. It was created "good,"[109] but it was made as something that grows, changes, and actualizes its potential over time, always becoming what it was made to be. In Irenaeus, it seems that creation began and is progressing toward an unknown, albeit promised, end. In Basil, however, the progress itself from beginning to end *is* the act of creation. Robert Wilken writes,

> There is no more challenging doctrine in the Bible than this, that creation is purposeful. Basil recognizes, too, that creation is also an ongoing work of God, and the world is providentially ordered by God's guiding hand. Creation effects things at every later moment.[110]

Basil describes a continuing growth of the universe, begun and sustained by God. Time is a product of creation that unfolds in our perspective, but in God's perspective is one definitive act. Just as all created things are like tops, which

108. "Τρία τοίνυν νοεῖς, τὸν προστάσσοντα Κύριον, τὸν δημιουργοῦντα Λόγον, τὸ στερεοῦν τὸ Πνεῦμα." *Spir.* 16.38.20–38 (SC 17:378–80; Anderson: 62–63).

109. "The universe did not provide itself with its own cause of existence, but God created as one good, something useful; as one wise, something beautiful; as one powerful, something mighty." Basil, *Hex.* 1.7 (GCS: 13.6–8)

110. Wilken, *Spirit*, 142.

"from the first impulse given to them, produce successive whirls when they are spun, so also the order of nature, having received its beginning from that first command, continues to all time thereafter, until it shall reach the common consummation of all things." He continues, applying the same principle of growth to people: "Let all of us hasten, full of fruit and good works to this, in order that, *planted in the house of the Lord*, we may *flourish in the courts of our God* [Ps. 92:13]."[111]

Origen's history of salvation was taken by his critics as an eschatology of return: briefly put, fallen souls must return to their incorporeal place of origin in the presence of God.[112] It was a view of the history of salvation that left the purpose of creation in question and could not answer the biblical view that God regarded creation as a good enterprise; it was a view of creation that subscribed to "an essentially Platonic and Greek premise: the principle that the genetic was qua genetic an inferior thing which hampered spiritual progress or salvation and which therefore had in some sense to be escaped or done away with."[113] If the goal is to re-extract souls from matter and restore them to a timeless and spiritual state of bliss in the presence of the Almighty, then matter is a negative and creation a faulty enterprise.

Basil differentiates himself from this version of the history of salvation. Where the Origenist system is a story of a precosmic fall from an original perfection and a return to what once was, in Basil it is a story of an original creation made for a perfect purpose, a story of a universe that was meant to become something in the eyes of God, meant to flourish in the courts of God as a tree or flower. For Basil, as in Irenaeus before him, the fall and the redemption are within history—the fall comes after the creation and is immediately matched with a plan of salvation. Basil does not preach an eschatology of return but an eschatology of perfection: the orientation of the soul is teleotic, not primordial. When Basil talks about the perfection of creation, he is not oriented toward a past that has been lost, as in the systematized Origenism of Methodius, but toward a future that has been intended.

111. *Hex.* 5.9 (GCS: 86.6–14).

112. This hardened systematization of Origen's thought is a conflation of his "research theology" and elements of the gnostic myth. Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 263; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 57. The Origenist system against which Basil often reacts is the system calcified by Methodius of Olympus who "takes Origen's treatment of eternal creation as the occasion to criticize the cosmological dualism he had long identified as the philosophical ingredient in the heretical teachings of his time" and not necessarily the theology of Origen himself. Patterson, *Methodius*, 211

113. Brooks Otis, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Cappadocian Conception of Time" StPatr 14 (1976): 342.

The role of the Spirit is also different. In Origen, the Spirit is the instructor and illuminator of those who have turned back toward the Lord. The story of the universe, according to Origen, is the story of an original state of perfection and unity disrupted before time began by the sinfulness of the human soul, which causes its fervor for God to cool. In *On First Principles* we read, "Before the ages minds were all pure . . . offering service to God and keeping his commandments," but when the Devil resisted God and was driven away from heaven, other spiritual powers were drawn away with him to various degrees: "God therefore made the present world and bound the soul to the body as a punishment [κόλασιν]."[114] Punishment in Origen always means education.[115] The history of salvation in Origen is a great cycle of fall and return, a great peregrination of the human soul that has lost its way and fallen into the ameliorative bonds of the flesh, but must strive to be restored to the state of perfection and bliss in which it originated and for which it is destined to return. The creation of the world, in Origen, is a temporary solution, a provisional stopgap where the fallen soul can be housed until it is educated back toward proper orientation to God. God has provided a schoolhouse for recalcitrant souls and the Holy Spirit is, in a sense, the schoolmaster of those who have determined to learn and joined the school of saints.[116] The Holy Spirit, in Origen, is the divine aid to those souls who have determined to return to the Lord, but the Holy Spirit works only among the saints, as seen above.[117] So Origen writes, "This will be a place of instruction and, so to speak, a lecture room or school for souls, in which they may be taught about all that they had seen on earth and may also receive some indications of what is to follow in the future."[118] In this passage, Origen is discussing an elementary training ground for souls that he imagines souls will pass through on their way back to heaven after leaving the material world. The church is the beginning of this training, and the Holy Spirit is the master of the course of education, but the Spirit is limited to work within the bounds of this program of spiritual rehabilitation.

Basil incorporates the Origenist pneumatology of sanctification into his own. There are deep strands of Origen running through Basil's theology of

114. *On First Principles* 1.8.1 (GCS: 96.10–11; Butterworth: 67).

115. Even Satan is placed by God in a training house of virtue in the hope that the quintessence of wickedness may himself one day be turned back toward God. Cf. *Against Celsus* 6.44. Henri Crouzel writes, "[Origen] considers divine punishments as remedial and merciful, aimed at the amendment and conversion of those punished." Crouzel, *Origen*, 265.

116. *On First Principles* 4.2.4.

117. Ibid., 1.3.5; 1.3.7.

118. Ibid., 2.11.6 (GCS: 190.4–6; Butterworth: 152).

Christian community and sanctification, such that "in outlining the lineaments of Origen's spiritual theology, one has put down the foundations of Basilian asceticism."[119] In the inner life, the Christian is meant to operate under the power of the Holy Spirit in an increasing knowledge of God animated by love.[120] The Christian community is a recapitulation of the Jerusalem church of Acts, a model of community that haunted Basil in its apparent absence.[121] At a time when it appeared that primitive charity was cooling off, when the charisms of the early church were all but dissipated, Basil was resolved that the church would be the model of charity and a demonstration of the continuing power of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.[122] Basil expected the community of faith to share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

> Furthermore, since no one has the capacity to receive all spiritual gifts, but the grace of the Spirit is given proportionately to the faith of each [cf. Rom. 12:6], when one is living in association with others, the grace privately bestowed on each individual becomes the common possession of his fellows. . . . He who receives any of these gifts does not possess it for his own sake but rather for the sake of others, so that, in the life passed in community, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the individual is at the same time necessarily transmitted to all.[123]

If those who receive gifts are faithful with them, even more and even greater gifts will be bestowed upon them.[124] There can be no question but that Basil followed Origen in believing that the Christian community was infused with power and gifts from the Holy Spirit and would manifest those gifts in remarkable ways. The Holy Spirit sanctifies within the Christian community: "Through him hearts are lifted up, the infirm are held by the hand, and those who progress are brought to perfection. He shines upon those who are cleansed from every spot, and makes them spiritual men through fellowship

119. Amand de Mendieta, *L'Ascèse Monastique de Saint Basile* (Maredsous: Éditions de Maredsous, 1949), 34.

120. "La vie monastique n'a qu'un but: la charité et l'union à Dieu." Ibid., 295.

121. Ibid., 83, 128–44.

122. Note Basil's deployment of key passages from Acts in his *Longer Rules*, *Shorter Rules*, and *Ethics*. He quotes Acts 2:44 at *Longer Rules* 7.4, 35.3; Acts 4:32 at *Ethics* 60.1, *Longer Rules* 7.4, 32.1, 35.3, *Shorter Rules* 85, 183; and Acts 4:35 at *Longer Rules* 19.1, 34.1, *Shorter Rules* 93, 131, 135, 148, 252. See Amand de Mendieta, *Ascèse*, 128.

123. *Longer Rules* 7 (PG 31, 929D–932A; Wagner: 250).

124. *Ethics* 58.

with himself."[125] The Holy Spirit, as Sanctifier, is operative within the Christian community. But he also adds another dimension to the work of the Spirit.

Basil took Origen's pneumatology further, freeing the Spirit from the confines of Christian community alone. Origen's schoolhouse for souls is an idea that Basil continues, but with a critical difference. Where Origen sees it as a spiritual schoolhouse above the material plane and on the way that the soul travels in its return to heaven, Basil preaches in his *Hexaemeron* that the entire cosmos has been created "primarily as a place of training and a school for the souls of human beings."[126] Where Origen teaches that the material world exists as a somewhat tragic necessity, Basil insists that the world was made good and with the benefit of human beings in mind: "Basil's position is that the universe does exist neither by chance nor without reason, but for a useful end, and for the great advantage of all beings, and particularly man."[127] The universe is fashioned for the good purposes of human beings, for their development and education as well as their provision.

For Basil, this is not a finished universe at its beginning. That is to say that the entire cosmos is dynamic and oriented toward a purpose, a future fulfillment. Following Aristotle, Basil is confident in saying that this purpose is constitutive of the essence of the cosmos. There is no essence without a purpose, no *ousia* without *telos*. The universe itself is on a path of fulfillment, steadily actualizing its potential over time between its beginning and its end. The Holy Spirit, as Basil describes, is the Perfecter, the *teleiōtikon*.[128]

Lewis Ayres writes that the emphasis on the Spirit as Perfecter is an innovation of the Pro-Nicene theologians who were trying to retain the order and rank of the persons of the Trinity, but also argue that "the Spirit is a coequal part of the triune Godhead."[129] Basil's use of *teleiōsis* has commonly been taken as a slur against the Spirit, as if Basil's pneumatology is suspended in middle ground between the supposed subordinationism of Origen and the full ontological association of essence found in Gregory of Nazianzus. If *teleiōsis* is a subordinate type of divine activity, a ministering or serving activity of a subservient Spirit, then it is correct to point out the latent subordinationism of

125. *Spir.* 9.23.12–15 (SC 17:328; Anderson: 44).

126. "Διδασκαλεῖον καὶ παιδευτήριον" *Hex.* 1.5 (GCS: 9.11–13).

127. Markos Orphanos, *Creation and Salvation according to St. Basil of Caesarea* (Athens: Gregorios Parisianos, 1975), 62. "Moreover, you will find that the world was not devised at random or to no purpose, but to contribute to some useful end [πρός τι τέλος ὠφέλιμον] and to the great advantage of all beings." *Hex.* 1.6 (GCS: 11.9–10; Way: 11).

128. "Τὴν τελειωτικήν, τό Πνεῦμα" *Spir.* 16.38.15 (SC 17:378).

129. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 217.

Basil's Trinitarian thought.[130] Anthony Meredith sees Basil's main theological inadequacy in his inability to include the Spirit fully in the Trinitarian act of creation.[131] It is the distinct aim and primary burden of this chapter to overthrow this view of *telieōsis* in the pneumatology of Basil; that is, to claim that *teleiōsis* is in fact a full inclusion of the Spirit in the divine act of creation and that Basil not only attempted, but succeeded in giving voice to a fully Trinitarian view of the Genesis drama. When Basil's doctrine of *teleiōsis* is thoroughly examined in accord with his cosmology, it becomes clear that it is not a subordinate activity but shares fully in the monarchy of God, and that it is an activity that nonetheless differentiates the person of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.

Basil is unwavering in his conviction that the Spirit shares in every operation of the Father and the Son in equal measure. While such an idea has been openly expressed about the Son in earlier theologians, the equality of the Spirit in this regard is a relative novelty.[132] In his second book against Eunomius, in which the primary dispute is over the relationship between the Son and the Father, Basil takes the time to point out the divine equality of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. He was defending the divinity of the Son against the allegation that because the Son makes the Spirit, the Son is different from God. In answer, he declares that the Spirit is actually the product of both the Son and the Father in equal and mysterious measure. Where Eunomius claims that the Son is different from the Father because the Son produced a Spirit, Basil counters:

> Isn't it clear to everyone that no activity [ἐνέργεια] of the Son is severed from the Father, and that of all the existing things belonging to the Son, none is foreign to the Father? For he says: *All that is mine is yours, and all that is yours is mine* [John 17:10]. So, then, how does he impute the cause of the Spirit to the Only-Begotten alone

130. For example in the recent work of Christopher Beeley: "Although [Basil] argues that the Spirit must not be conceived as a creaturely servant, but as sharing in the kingship of the Creator-Lord, the Spirit does not in fact fully share with the Father and the Son in the creation of all things, but merely perfects them." Beeley notes that in this sense, Basil reflects Origen. Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 298.

131. "On the contrary the defective nature of [Basil's] pneumatology proceeds from an imperfect (or barely existent), awareness of the role played by the Holy Spirit in the work of creation." Anthony Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 48 (1981): 205.

132. Swete, *Spirit*, 143, 250–51.

> and take the making of the Spirit as an accusation against the Only-Begotten's nature?[133]

The Father and the Son hold all activity, indeed all things, in common. The relationship between the Spirit and the Father and Son is an indication of equality, not subordination.

Basil develops the idea of mutual Trinitarian activity further in his third book against Eunomius, which is devoted to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Here Basil makes it clear that not only do the Father and the Son share all activity in common, but the Spirit too is a participant in the unique activity of God.

> And just as it is said that the Father distributes the activities to those who are worthy of receiving the activities, and that the Son distributes the services by the dignities of the service, so too it is testified that the Holy Spirit distributes the spiritual gifts to those who are worthy of receiving the spiritual gifts: *Now there are distributions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distributions of services, but the same Lord; and there are distributions of activities, but it is the same God who works all of them in all people* [1 Cor. 12:4-6]. Do you see how here too the activity of the Holy Spirit is equally ranked with the activity of the Father and the Son?[134]

In Basil's view, the Spirit fully participates in every activity of the Trinity *ad extra*. In the course of his argument for the divinity of the Spirit in *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil returns again and again to the foundational argument "that in everything the Holy Spirit is indivisibly and inseparably joined to the Father and the Son."[135]

> Peter said to Sapphira, *How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? You have not lied to men but to God* [Acts 5:9,4], and this shows that to sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against God. Understand from this that in every operation the Holy Spirit is indivisibly united with the Father and the Son.[136]

133. *Eun.* 2.34.10–16 (SC 2:140; cf. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz: 183).
134. Ibid., 3.4.27–38 (SC 2:158–60; cf. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz: 190).
135. *Spir.* 16.37.1–3 (SC 17:374).
136. Ibid., 16.37.15–20 (SC 17:374).

The unity of the Godhead is found in the unity of operation for Basil. If what God does is one thing in which the three Persons each coequally participate, then the Trinity is displayed, although it is true to say that each Person acts alone and perfectly, and all three perform the function together and in concert. Both statements are true to fact, leaving the mystery of the Trinity inscrutable to the human mind, but nonetheless disclosed in the wonder of the activities of God.

Basil presents an innovative proof of the "communion of the Spirit with the Father and the Son"[137] that he derives from the creation of the holy order of angels.[138] The angels serve as a particularly clear example for Basil, who considers them to be perfect beings living a life of worship that is to be emulated by the Christian community. Angels are not perfect by nature, however, but have their perfection as a continuous gift of the Holy Spirit; they are not perfect in their *being* but in their *becoming* with the aid of the sanctifying Spirit. Angels constantly grow into the perfection they behold in God. Basil writes,

> So the ministering spirits exist by the will of the Father, are brought into being by the work of the Son, and are perfected by the presence of the Spirit, since angels are perfected by perseverance in holiness. . . . Perceive these three: the Lord who commands, the Word who creates, and the Spirit who strengthens. What kind of strengthening is it? Perfection in holiness, which expresses itself in an unyielding, unchangeable commitment to goodness. Such holiness is impossible without the Spirit. The angelic powers are not by their own nature holy, otherwise there would be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. Rather, they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit in proportion to their excellence.[139]

137. Ibid., 16.38.1–2 (SC 17:376).

138. Brooks Otis contends that concern for the doctrine of angels takes a primary place in the coherence of Cappadocian thought: "Cappadocian thought can be defined as an attempt to unite the doctrine of God with the doctrine of angels and the doctrine of man in a way which would equal the logical consistency of the system of Origen without involving its heretical consequences." Otis, "Cappadocian," 98. Basil's view of the angels and their importance is explored by Heising, "Geist," 257–308. Heising contends that Basil leaned toward Athanasius for a heightened role of the Spirit in creation to help extract himself from a view of the Spirit as limited to the sanctification of saints and angels that he inherited from his monastic tradition (273). The sanctification of angels is particularly interesting in that it provides, according to Heising, an opportunity for Basil to stress the absolute difference between God and what God has created, even in the spiritual realms (285–87). See also, Luislampe, Spiritus, 107–13.

139. *Spir.* 16.38.15–19, 37–45 (SC 17:378–80; Anderson: 62–63).

Basil employs his regular language for the unity of Trinitarian operation, but the novelty is in the argument from the angels. Angels are presented in Scripture as the model of holiness, exercising perfect and unfailing service to God, singing praises and glorifying God in perfect harmony.[140] Basil capitalizes on these scriptural images and makes the point that angels are not, in fact, perfect by nature, but by the perfecting (teleotic) activity of the Spirit. They are made perfect and holy by the perfection and holiness of God the Spirit. If they were holy by nature, then they would themselves be of equal rank to the Holy Spirit and worthy of equal praise.

For Basil and Gregory of Nyssa after him, it was critical in their argument against Eunomius that ultimately only God is holy. Basil and Gregory argue precisely this point, that *holy* (that is, the source of all holiness) is ultimately equivalent to *God*, a term that does not admit a plural but is always singular, always alone.[141] The perfection in holiness that the angels display is a product of the unceasing activity of the Spirit over time, holding them in holiness, allowing them to display over time their resistance to change or alteration and their unceasing commitment to what is good. Angels do have free will, in Basil's view: "They keep their rank by persevering in goodness, by freely choosing to never abandon serving him who is good by nature."[142] Angels could turn away and by nature are capable of falling from their rank. It is because of this possibility that the continuing work of the Holy Spirit as Perfecter is necessary: "Holiness is not part of their essence; it is accomplished in them through communion with the Spirit. . . . They are free to choose either good or evil, and for this reason they need the Spirit's help."[143]

The work of the Spirit as Perfecter, then, is not an afterthought. It is a necessity.

> If we agree that the Spirit is subordinate, then the choirs of angels are destroyed, the ranks of archangels are abolished, and everything is thrown into confusion, since their life loses all law, order, or boundary. How can the angels cry *Glory to God in the highest,* [Luke 2:14] unless the Spirit enables them to do so? *No one speaking by the*

140. Cf. Isaiah 6, Luke 2, Revelation 4, etc.

141. This argument is developed forcefully by Gregory of Nyssa in his *Against Macedonius*, but before that, it is clear that Basil considered the simplicity and solitude of divinity axiomatic: "Since divinity is one, it is impossible to take up a conception of the Father or the Son that distinctively identifies them, unless our thinking is shaped by the addition of the unique features." *Eun.* 2.29.10–13 (SC 2:122).

142. *Spir.* 16.38.54–57 (SC 17:382; Anderson: 63).

143. Ibid., 16.38.53–54, 67–69 (SC 17:382; Anderson: 63–64).

> *Spirit of God ever says, "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit* [1 Cor. 12:3].[144]

The fact that the angels fall into a rank and order devoted to the praise and worship of God is indication enough of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit for Basil. The angels provide Basil with a ready example that the most profoundly faithful and holy creatures in the cosmos nonetheless rely on the continuing sustenance of the Spirit, drawing them ever more into exactly what they are meant to be.

The teleotic activity of the Spirit is not limited to the angels. In fact, the whole of creation is moving toward a given purpose and is drawn toward its intended existence by the continuing activity of the Spirit. There is a continuous action of sustaining the world and drawing it toward its proper end that is characteristic of the Spirit. From the example of the angels, it is clear that we must speak of a certain progress toward perfection in Basil's doctrine of creation. It is necessary in Basil that the creation is not begun in a perfect state, but created at the beginning for a perfected end and perfected over the course of time. It is the nature of the universe to move toward perfection, that is to be moved toward perfection by the Perfecter, God the Spirit. No part of creation is perfect in itself, holy in itself, fully actualized in itself; these are categories for God alone. What is not God must participate in perfection, holiness, and actualization, and this participation is what is meant by calling the Spirit of God the Perfecter.[145]

At the heart of this view of the Spirit is Basil's doctrine of time as a creation of God bracketed within eternity by the *archē* at the beginning and the *telos* at the end. The error of Eunomius, which he inherited from Arius and Aetius, was in Basil's view the imprecise extension of chronology into the doctrine of God. Arius, and Eunomius after him, claimed that the Son was created by the Father prior to time and prior to the ages (πρὸ χρόνων καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων).[146] Basil

144. Ibid., 16.38.57–60 (SC 17:382; Anderson: 63).

145. Gregory of Nyssa would later explore this view of perfection in *On the Making of Man*, in which he makes the claim that "humanity" is not fully created until all instantiations of human being have been created and lived their lives; the nature (φύσις) of humanity is only disclosed, and only finished being created, when the final human being has finished living life in time. For Gregory, it is the collective nature of all humanity extended over all time from beginning to end, when the very limit of time is reached at the *twinkling of an eye* [1 Cor. 15:52], that bears the image of God. *On the Making of Man* 22. It bears noting that Gregory describes his project in this work as completing the promised sermons of Basil on the creation of human beings (cf. *Hex.* 9.6). Gregory uses the language of "flourishing in the courts of the Lord" to describe the extension of humanity over time, building on Basil's use of Psalm 92. Cf. Basil, *Hom. on Psalm 28 (LXX)* 3; *Hex.* 5.10.

claims, however, that this does not satisfy the Scripture that claims that the aeons (αἰῶνας) were created through the Son [Heb. 1:2] or the claim in John that all things (πάντα) came into existence through him [John 1:3].[147] Furthermore, it introduces an interval, or *diastema*,[148] between the Father and the Son that presses the Son out of the uncreated and divine realm and into the created and worldly realm, and further implies that there was a time when God became a Father, introducing change into the Godhead itself.[149] Basil can leave no room for such an imprecise interval prior to the divine act of creation:

146. This is found in the statement of faith of Arius and his Alexandrian supporters that is retained by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 69.7). Otis, "Cappadocian," 104; Williams, *Arius*, 271. Eunomius makes the same claim for a generation prior to all things (πρὸ πάντων). *Apol.* 12.11, 28.6 (Vaggione: 48, 74). Eunomius does not include the claim that the generation of the Son is πρὸ χρόνων however, recognizing that time is a requirement for change. There can be no change without participation in time. Eunomius uses this point to argue for the difference between the Son and the οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ that does not participate in time. *Apol.* 10.4 (Vaggione: 44). The phrase πρὸ αἰώνων is included in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and is not found in the Nicene Creed, about which three things can be said: (1) it is included as part of the discussion of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father and can only be understood in nondiastemic and nonchronological terms; (2) it was likely included as a concessive overture toward the anti-Nicene parties involved; and (3) the phrase has biblical currency. Kelly considers the addition of πρὸ αἰώνων insignificant. J. N. D. Kelly also asserts that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed is not modeled after the Nicene, but another creed or confession with Nicene concerns added as an overlay. If this is accepted, the failure to omit the phrase must be explained rather than the impetus to include it. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Continuum, 2006), 303. Cf. John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 377. Hanson does not attach any particular significance to the clause. Hanson, *Search*, 816–17.

147. "But if this is true, it is clear that Scripture is a liar when it says that *through him the ages came into existence* [Heb. 1:2] and teaches that *all things came into existence through him* [John 1:3], since the ages are also included among the *all things*." *Eun.* 2.13.10–13 (SC 2:48).

148. Brooks Otis may be correct that this defining term for the debate over the doctrine of time entered the consciousness of the fathers through Methodius' critique of Origen. Otis, "Gregory," 336. Lloyd Patterson and Rowan Williams both follow him in this conclusion. Lloyd Patterson, "Methodius, Origen and the Arian Dispute," StPatr 17 (1982): 917–20; Williams, *Arius*, 169. Basil rejects any notion of an interval within the Trinity: "The Father is the one who has being that is perfect and in need of nothing; he is the root and source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Son is the living Word in full divinity, and the one begotten of the Father who lacks nothing. The Spirit is also full; he is not part of another, but thought of as perfect and complete in himself. Furthermore the Son is conjoined to the Father without there being any interval [ἀδιαστάτως] between them, and the Spirit is conjoined to the Son; for there is nothing that separates them. Nor is there anything that severs their eternal affinity [ἀϊδίου συνάφειαν]. After all, no age [αἰών] intrudes between them. Nor does our mind form the concept of separation, as if the Only-Begotten was not always together with the Father or the Holy Spirit did not co-exist with the Son." *Against Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoians* 1 (PG 31, 609AB). Arguments against intervals within the Trinity are also found at: *Eun.* 1.20, 2.12–13; *Epp.* 38.4–5, 52.2; and *Spir.* 6.14, 25.59.

> For if there is anything between the Father and the Son, this must be prior to the existence of the Son. So, then, what could this be? What else could this be besides an age [αἰών] or a time [χρόνος]? … What was the interval [διάστημα] "when he was not," as you say? What designation will you conceive for it? After all, common usage classifies every interval under either time or age.[150]

There can be no Arian, pretime time. Basil claims that the notion is as offensive to Scripture as it is to common reason.[151] So he not only closes the cosmos by ontological distinction between the Creator and the created, but also by carefully bracketing all time between *archē* and *telos*. Whatever is in time is not God, and whatever is outside of time is God. When, therefore, Basil speaks of the Spirit as *Teleiōtikon*, Basil is speaking of the suspension of the entire created order in time from beginning to end with the insight that from God's perspective in eternity the creation of time is not itself a chronological but a singular and punctiliar act—not punctiliar as the first act in time, but punctiliar from the eternal perspective as a singular Trinitarian act of God.

Eunomius and his party denied any association between the Spirit and the divine act of creation. Eunomius writes of the Spirit in his *Apology*,

> He is third both in nature and in order since he was brought into existence at the command of the Father by the action of the Son. He is honored in third place as the first and greatest work of all, the only such "thing made" [ποίημα] of the Only-Begotten, lacking indeed godhead and the power of creation [δημιουργικῆς δυνάμεως], but filled with the power of sanctification and instruction.[152]

149. *Eun.* 2.12.27–31. This is an argument also presented by Athanasius. *Against the Arians* 1.11–13; Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 151–54.

150. *Eun.* 2.13.4–7, 18–20 (SC 2:47–48). There is a distinct parallel between *Eun.* 2.11–13 and *Ep.* 38 (now often attributed to Gregory of Nyssa) in the argument against a διάστημα between the Father and the Son.

151. The specter of an eternal coexistent rears its head again if time is introduced into the Godhead. As contemporary theologian Karl Barth puts it, "There is no such thing as absolute time, no immutable law of time. . . . There is no time in itself rivaling God and imposing conditions on him. There is no god called Chronos." *Church Dogmatics* III.2, 456. Basil, like Barth, could not accept even *time* as an eternal coexistent; the generation of the Son from the Father is, in his view, "without passion [ἀπαθῆ], without division [ἀμέριστον], without separation [ἀδιαίρετον], and atemporal [ἄχρονον]." *Eun.* 2.16.31 (SC 2:64). Cf. Behr, *Nicene*, 309.

152. *Apol.* 25.22–26 (Vaggione: 68).

He makes it clear that the Spirit does not participate in the creation of the world and shares no demiurgic power with the Father or the Son. An Arian fragment also exists that reads: "Hic spiritus non est deus nec dominus quoniam nec creator."[153] Basil clearly sought to overturn this view of the Spirit.

Basil is very careful about his doctrine of the beginning. The nature of the beginning of all things is a veritable preoccupation for him, returned to again and again in his writings and sermons. It was an important issue in all Christian thought prior to him and his own explorations made some critical advances. The issue is the exegesis of John 1:1, *In the beginning* [ἐν ἀρχῇ] *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Basil returns to this verse no less than twenty-nine times in his known writings and sermons.[154] The word used both in Genesis 1 and John 1, *archē*, is an important theme for Basil. Robert Wilken writes, "In Greek *archē* does not simply mean 'beginning,' that is, 'when'; it can also signify the principle that gives coherence to the whole."[155] Basil is fully aware of the range of meaning and exploits it regularly in his rhetoric. In a sermon on John 1:1, Basil declared his preference for the theology of the Gospel of John and the power and beauty of its opening verse:

> Indeed the most resounding voice of his evangelical proclamation, and that which surpasses all hearing and is an utterance higher than all understanding, is the Gospel of John, the Son of Thunder, whose prologue we now hear excerpted from its place in the Gospel, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* [John 1:1]. All who hear these things, even those outside of the great word of truth, are struck with their universal wisdom and stand amazed.[156]

For Basil, the verse was one of such beauty, such balance and deep coherence, such resounding power that it was like looking directly into the sun to try to understand it entirely; but, like the sun, the nature of the universe is disclosed as its light is shed abroad.[157] While the sermon would continue into argumentation about the nature of the Word and the identity and relationship of the Son to the Father, in contradistinction to the claims of Eunomius and

153. PL 13, 601A.

154. J. Allenbach, et al., *Biblia Patristica*, vol 5 (Paris: Recherche Scientifique, 1991), 302.

155. Wilken, *Spirit*, 140.

156. *Homily on the Verse: "In the Beginning Was the Word"* 1 (PG 31, 472BD).

157. "When it is recognized that the intelligibility of the world is derived from something beyond itself, everything comes into focus. Creation displaces cosmology." Wilken, *Spirit*, 141.

the Anti-Nicenes, Basil first explores the meaning of the *archē*. Some say that the one who is begotten cannot exist eternally with the one who is unbegotten, that if the Son is begotten of the Father then there is a time before the begetting when he did not exist. Basil finds their answer in this verse.

> So that no one would be able to say such things, the Holy Spirit prepared a defense through the Gospel: *In the beginning*, he said, *was the Word*. If you should master this saying, you should feel no fear from the practitioners of evil arts. For even if your opponent says, "If he was begotten, then he did not exist," then you say, *He was in the beginning*. "But," he says, "how could he exist before being begotten?" You do not leave off the statement, *he was*, nor do you abandon the statement, *in the beginning*. The high summit of *beginning* he cannot comprehend; the outermost point of *beginning* he cannot uncover. He will not prevail against you with misleading terminology.[158]

Beginning, *archē*, is an insurmountable height, an unconquerable peak. It cannot be entirely comprehended in its breadth and depth of meaning. But whatever it means, says Basil, the Word was in the beginning with God; he leaves no room for the Arian time before time.

Of course, there are a number of possibilities in Scripture for the meaning of *archē*, but they usually refer to beginnings of things as we experience them in our common lives in the course of time.

> For in this life there are many beginnings to many things, but ultimately there is only one beginning of all. *The beginning of the good way* [Prov. 16:7, LXX], the proverb says, but it is the beginning of a way as a first movement, whence begin many avenues appearing in the dynamic flow that follows. Also, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* [Ps. 111:10]. This *beginning* is different from the passage previously quoted, for by it the *beginning* is like elementary education in the rearing of children. So, *the fear of the Lord* is elementary education for wisdom. But this *beginning* also applies to certain mature people, those established in their minds yet having gained little or no wisdom, and are taken up in the fear of God. *Beginnings* [ἀρχαί] also refer to political powers that are surpassing in authority, but these *beginnings* [ἀρχαί] are rulers [ἀρχαί] of certain

158. *Homily on the Verse: "In the Beginning Was the Word"* 1 (PG 31, 473BC).

> subjects, and related to them in that way. Likewise the point is the beginning of the line, and the line is the beginning of the illustration, and an illustration is a beginning of a full body, just as the elemental truths are beginnings of every logical hypothesis.[159]

In typical fashion, Basil searches for a meaning of the word *archē* by finding other uses in the Scriptures and seeing if any of them apply. But they do not. The beginning in which the Word is present with God, the beginning of the universe, is not a starting point of a journey that may take many different routes, it is not a practice of elementary education or conviction of mind, it is not a political ruler, nor is it the geometric point from which a vector extends. The beginning of all things is different from these.

> Surely this *beginning* is not like these others. For it is bound to nothing, it serves nothing, it conspires with no one, but it is utterly free, ungoverned, released from any encumbrances in relation to another, insurmountable to the mind, which cannot ascend to its inner logic for it does not have the ability to discover the things which are surpassing. For even if you should attempt to make an estimation of *beginning* in your mind, you will find that it has estimated you, and has gone before you to meet your thoughts. Allow your own mind, as so dearly it wishes, to run ahead and extend itself toward the things above. Then when it has wandered down countless paths and stepped into many holes, and finally returned again to you, through this you will find that it is not possible to conceive of a *beginning* that is lower than yourself. This is because the *beginning* is always outside of what can be conceived and greater than what can be discovered by investigation. In this *beginning*, then, *was the Word*.[160]

159. Ibid. (PG 31, 473C–476A).

160. Ibid., 2 (PG 31, 476AB). Cf. *Spir.* 6.14.20–30: "The supreme eminence of the Father is inconceivable; thought and reflection are utterly unable to penetrate the begetting of the Lord. By means of two words St. John has admirably contained the concept within tangible boundaries: he says *In the beginning was the Word.* Thought cannot reach beyond *was*, or the imagination *beginning*. No matter how far your thoughts travel backward, you cannot get beyond the *was*. No matter how hard you strain to see what is beyond the Son, you will find it impossible to pass outside the confines of the *beginning*. Therefore, true religion teaches us to think of the Son with the Father." (SC 17:290; Anderson: 29–30).

The beginning of all things is inscrutable. We may try to press our minds backward toward it, but we will not be able to accomplish the task. If it truly is the beginning of all things, then it is the beginning of our thoughts and our very existence. We have no way of extending our thoughts back to the beginning out of which time emerges, into the beginning in which the Word, and the Father and the Spirit, share intimacy in the uniqueness of themselves.

In another sermon, Basil points out that there is nothing in existence whose being extends back into the *archē*, and so there is no way of comprehending this beginning in which the Son was begotten of the Father:

> Do not seek after what cannot be discovered; you will never find it. Even if you did seek after it, what do you have to instruct you? Can you learn from the earth? It was nonexistent. From the seas? There was no water. From the heavens? There were no draping skies. From the sun and the moon and the stars? They were not yet created. But how about from the ages [αἰώνων]? The Only-Begotten is prior to the ages. You cannot examine things that are not of eternal existence for the understanding of things that exist eternally.[161]

It is not possible to follow the things that exist in creation back into the shadows of the inscrutable *archē*. It is in this *archē*, Basil claims, that the Father begot the Son, and it is in this *archē* that God created the universe. This *archē* is not a natural emanation or effulgence of God. Basil is insistent that the creation of the cosmos in the beginning is nothing less than the move from eternity into time. The *archē* is the location of God's creation of time, while God remains in the position of eternity. Worldly eternity, which we understand in human perspective as the endless passage of time, is different from God's eternity.[162] Time cannot measure eternity, nor ultimately are they even related to one another by anything more than analogy. For Basil, time is distinct and separate

161. *Homily against Those Who Slanderously Claim We Profess Three Gods* 3 (PG 31, 1493B).

162. Basil's preoccupation with the difference between time and eternity undoubtedly fostered Gregory of Nyssa's interest in the theme—a fact laid plain by the study of Brooks Otis that reveals Methodius as their mutual target. Otis, though diligent in his pursuit of Methodius, did not search the homilies or letters of Basil for this theme and failed to recognize his contribution. This exploration of the difference between time and eternity laid the groundwork for Gregory of Nyssa's most valuable and most enduring contribution to Trinitarian theology, Christian mysticism, and the history of Christian thought: the doctrine of the eternity of God as an object of never-ending Christian devotion. The human being stands in time (even after death, human thought is *diastemic*) beholding God in eternity. Otis, „Gregory," 339–40. See also Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 114–15, 156.

from eternity. The *archē*, for Basil is that place of holy privilege where God can freely create all that exists, leaping over the absolute divides between existence and nonexistence, eternity and time, incorporeality and body, changelessness and decay. The *archē* is a place little understood from human perspective, and for us stands as a limit impossible to breach.

We have already seen the importance of the beginning in Basil's arguments against the eternity of the world, but there is more to be said about his presentation of the beginning of all things in the *Hexaemeron*. In a passage similar to the homily on John 1:1, Basil explores the meaning of the beginning in Genesis 1:1.

> Or, perhaps, the words *in the beginning he created* were used because of the instantaneous and timeless [ἀκαριαῖον καὶ ἄχρονον] act of creation, since the beginning is something immeasurable and indivisible. As the beginning of the road is not yet the road, and the beginning of the house, not yet the house, so also, the beginning of time is not yet time, on the contrary, not even the least part of it. And, if anyone should say contentiously that the beginning is time, let him know that he will be dividing it into parts of time. And these parts are beginning and middle and end. But, it is entirely ridiculous to think of the beginning of a beginning. Moreover, he who divides the beginning will make two instead of one, or rather, many and unlimited beginnings, since the part which is divided is always cut into other parts. In order, therefore, that we may be taught that the world came into existence instantaneously at the will of God, it is said: *In the beginning he created.* Other interpreters of this, giving the meaning more clearly, have said: "God made summarily," that is, immediately and in a moment. Such, then, to mention a few from the many points, is the explanation concerning the beginning.[163]

Why is the beginning not a part of time? Because time is an ineluctable continuum, fleeting, ever passing from future, to present, to past without respite: "In truth, is this not the nature of time, whose past has vanished, whose future is not yet at hand, and whose present escapes perception before it is known?"[164]

163. *Hex.* 1.6 (GCS: 11.15–12.5; Way: 11).

164. Ibid., 1.5 (GCS: 9.16–18; Way: 9). The resonance between this characterization of time in Basil and Augustine's explorations of the inescapable continuum of time is notable (e.g., *Confessions* 11.11, 13–15). J. F. Callahan, "Basil of Caesarea: A New Source for St. Augustine's Theory of Time," *Harvard*

It is the nature of time to change; in fact, whatever is locked in time is also locked into change. Basil preaches,

> Such also is the nature of all that has been made, either clearly growing or clearly decaying, but possessing no evident settled state nor stability. Therefore, it was proper for the bodies of animals and plants, bound, as it were, by force to a sort of current, and maintained in a motion which leads to birth and corruption, to be possessed of the nature of time, which has the peculiar character natural to things which change.[165]

Time, then, is a linear continuum. Basil employs Zeno's paradox of motion to point out that there is no way to move in a linear continuum back to the beginning. Zeno of Elea had confounded his students with the notion that movement from one point to another was logically absurd. If you need to get from one point to another, you must first travel halfway to the destination. If there is any remainder of distance, then you must first travel half of that distance before you can reach the destination; and so on ad infinitum until the simple movement from one point to another requires a leap across infinity. Basil insists here that time is the same way. The *archē* cannot be part of time, or participating in time, nor even like time. Time can always be segmented into past, present, and future, and the segment that remains can also be segmented. The *archē* is not such. It is separated from time entirely, so much so that it requires a leap across infinity for time to be created out of the beginning.

George Dragas considers this insight to be Basil's greatest contribution to Christian cosmology. There were many in the ancient world who could discuss the *archē* as the first cause of all things, the primary source of all motion, or the overarching principle of coherence in the universe. Few could really ascertain that it had to be separate from the universe, that it must be the residence of God alone. In Basil, the infinite leap from *archē* to time is accomplished by nothing other than "the creative free will of God."[166] If the beginning were tied to the continuum of time, this would press some necessity upon God in

Studies in Classical Philology 63 (1958): 437–54. This tradition of the doctrine of time and its enigma is absorbed by such thinkers as Karl Barth: "For what is our present but a step from darkness to darkness, from the 'no longer' to the 'not yet,' and therefore a continual deprivation of what we were and had in favor of a continual grasping of what we will (perhaps) be and have?" *Church Dogmatics* III.2, 514.

165. *Hex*. 1.5 (GCS: 9.18–10.2; Way: 9).

166. Dragas, "Basil," 1104. "Τῇ βουλήσει τοῦ θεοῦ." *Hex*. 1.6 (GCS: 12.1). Dragas points out that this is in direct opposition to the view of Plotinus (*Enneads* 2.1.1).

the manner of his creation. Dragas writes, "It is my view that Saint Basil's concept of beginning . . . constitutes his fundamental Christian contribution to cosmology. Its most crucial element is its transcendence—the axiom that the beginning of something is distinct from what begins from it."[167] Basil's separation of *archē* and time means that there is not a direct connection between the ordered principles of the existing cosmos and the one who made them. God is actually quite distinct from what God made, separated across a divide as wide as the difference between time and its beginning.

Basil approaches his understanding of the end, the *telos*, with as much energy. Like *archē*, *telos* also has a range of meanings that Basil is happy to exploit and combine as it suits his argument. For one thing, *telos* can simply mean the chronological end of a segment of time. If a segment of time has a beginning, it most naturally also has an end, as Basil writes, "It is absolutely necessary that things begun in time be also brought to an end in time. If they have a beginning in time, have no doubt about the end."[168] Basil interprets Isaiah to mean that the end of time will be marked by a consummation in fire,[169] but it will also be the fulfillment of the purposes for which all things were made. It is the simultaneous end and regeneration of the world that Basil anticipates,[170] when all things will be purified by fire and set in their proper order. Basil subscribes to a

> notion of the teleology of the world which is by and large absent from Greek thought but constitutes a distinctive characteristic of Christian teaching. The souls, says Saint Basil, will be granted another life and therefore this world will be transformed. If the present world is fit for our present life, our future life will require a new world.[171]

Christian eschatology orients history toward a perfect future and hopes for a time after time, a new history of the perfected life. In the meantime, Basil judges goodness by orientation toward the ultimate purpose. The end is not only the

167. Dragas, "Basil," 1104.

168. *Hex.* 1.3 (GCS: 6.13–15; Way: 7).

169. "Yet, there will be a time when all things will be burnt up by fire, as Isaiah says when he addresses the God of the universe: *[You] who say to the deep: be thou desolate, and I will dry up the rivers* [Isa. 44:27]." Ibid., 3.6 (GCS: 49.5–7; Way: 47).

170. "Περὶ συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου τούτου καὶ παλιγγενεσίας αἰῶνος ἀπαγγελλόντων." Ibid., 1.4 (GCS: 8.11–14). Basil recognizes that this doctrine is a subject for derision among detractors, but he stands committed to it as an important strand of Christian thought.

171. Dragas, "Basil," 1102.

end of a segment of chronological time; it is also the suitable purpose of a thing, the purpose for which it was made. Being perfected means being shaped and drawn toward that suitable end over time.

Basil is not far from Aristotle in suggesting that the end of a thing, the "sense of *end* or *that for the sake of which*"[172] is constitutive of the nature of the thing itself. What is more, the end of a thing not only details its nature, but the end of a thing is also its inherent good. A thing's end, in other words, is its proper purpose, the reason for which it was fashioned and made. To judge the relative goodness of a thing, one judges its capacity to be used according to its purpose, its capacity to fulfill its purposed end. This is, interestingly, just how Basil interprets the divine declaration that the world is "good" at Genesis 1:8 (LXX):

> *And God saw that it was good*. It is not to the eyes of God that things made by him afford pleasure, nor is his approbation of beautiful objects such as it is with us; but, beauty is that which is brought to perfection [ἐκτελεσθὲν] according to the principle of art and which contributes to the usefulness of its end [τὴν τοῦ τέλους εὐχρηστίαν]. He, therefore, who proposed to himself a clear aim [σκοπὸν] for his works, having recourse to his own artistic principles, approved them individually as fulfilling his aim.[173]

God's approbation is based upon the fact that the thing made has a purpose and is suited to fulfilling that purpose. This is the basis for God's pronouncement that it is good. This divine pronouncement is a proleptic designation, however, for these created things have not yet fulfilled their purpose. Nevertheless, God, who is eternal and sees all time at once from beginning to end, is able to declare them good (i.e., set them on course toward fulfilling their purpose) at the beginning because God knows that they are in fact good at the end. The oration continues:

> In fact, a hand by itself or an eye alone or any of the members of a statue, lying about separately, would not appear beautiful to one chancing upon them; but, set in their proper place, they exhibit beauty of relationship, scarcely evident formerly, but now easily recognized by the uncultured man. Yet, the artist, even before the combination of the parts knows the beauty of each and approves

172. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.3 (194B; Barnes: 332).

173. *Hex.* 3.10 (GCS: 55.7–12; Way: 53).

> them individually, directing his judgment to the final aim. God is described on the present occasion as such an artistic commender of each of his works, but he will render becoming praise also to the whole completed world.[174]

What is explained here is that God sees the whole act of creation from beginning to end as one enterprise; God is able to see the beginning and the end simultaneously. Basil is not only explaining how God could call each part "good" before seeing the end of all his own creation, but also that the ultimate end of creation is the true viewpoint from which God judges all the world:

> *Good* here means useful or purposeful, or capable to serve a specific aim; and therefore, no one should understand it anthropomorphically, as if God was taken by surprise at what actually happened as a result of his creative activity. In other words, God's *good* is not something aesthetic but something teleological.[175]

This same attitude is the foundation for Basil's claim that there is nothing in the universe that is without some useful purpose. Some plants, for example, that may be poisonous if eaten, may have some other suitable purpose that the physician is able to deduce "for the relief of certain diseases."[176] As Timothy Miller writes,

> In God's scheme such apparently evil creations have a good purpose. They might nourish certain animals, or, transformed by the physicians' skills, they might provide the proper additive to restore the imbalance of disease to the equilibrium of health. Thus, even apparently destructive elements of the visible world are beneficial when they are used properly by the good physician.[177]

174. Ibid. (GCS: 55.12–20; Way: 53).

175. Dragas, "Basil," 1111.

176. *Hex.* 5.4 (GCS: 75.10–11; Way: 72).

177. Timothy Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 55. Miller goes on to explain the relation of this theology of creation to Basil's support of the medical art: "In his *Long Rules*, a guide for the ideal Christian life, Basil posed the question directly concerning the healing craft: 'Is the use of medicine in conformity with piety?' He answered yes (*Long Rules* 55). To those Christians who maintained that one ought only to rely on the supernatural powers of God to banish diseases, Basil responded that the Creator worked just as much through the visible world as he did through the unseen. Thus, God's grace was as evident in the healing power of medicine and its practitioners as it was in miraculous cures. In fact, such natural cures could lead to a greater awareness of

There is no question that everything created by God was fashioned for some good and useful end; it is only a matter of finding that purpose and deploying the creation for that end. This process is what Basil refers to as "remedying the deficiencies of nature."[178] Goodness is a matter of being properly oriented toward the purpose, the *telos*, for which a thing was made.

In a discourse on theodicy, Basil demonstrates that the same is true for the descendants of Adam. In Basil's characterization of the fall of Adam, the original man was created oriented toward the things of heaven, looking toward God as the source of all good things and resting "amid the delights of paradise."[179] Adam became satiated with the good gifts, however, and preferred the fleshly delights to their spiritual purpose,

> And immediately he was outside paradise and outside that blessed way of life, becoming evil not from necessity but from thoughtlessness. Because of this he also sinned through wicked free choice, and he died through the sin. *For the wages of sin is death* [Rom. 6:23]. For to the extent that he withdrew from life, he likewise drew near to death. For God is life, and the privation of life is death. Therefore Adam prepared death for himself through his withdrawal from God, in accord with what is written, *Behold, those who remove themselves from you are destroyed* [Ps. 72:27, LXX]. Thus God did not create death, but we brought it upon ourselves by a wicked intention.[180]

For Basil, what matters is the orientation, since we are in the process of becoming that toward which we are oriented—either death or life. The end of mankind is God: "Endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and, the highest of all desires, becoming God."[181] Human beings, like the rest of creation of which they are a part, are measured in goodness by their orientation toward their proper end. They are helpless in being directed toward their proper end, as in fact all of creation is helpless in being oriented toward its proper end, without the Spirit of God.

God's all-present power. Medicine was in perfect accord with Christian virtue so long as one never lost sight of pleasing God and placing one's spiritual health on the highest plane" (55).

178. *Long Rules* 55 (PG 31, 1044; Wagner: 330).

179. *Homily Explaining That God Is Not the Cause of Evil* 7 (PG 31, 344C; Harrison: 74).

180. Ibid. (PG 31, 345A; Harrison: 74–75).

181. "Θεὸν γενέσθαι." *Spir*. 9.23.23–25 (SC 17:328; Anderson: 44).

The theological discussion of Basil's doctrine of the beginning and his teleotic cosmology serves to illustrate and add deeper dimensions to his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. When the universe is understood as an ineluctable course from beginning to end in time, with all things oriented toward their proper end and propelled toward it by the power of the Spirit of God, then we see more clearly just what it is that Basil means when he calls the Holy Spirit the Perfecter. Just as the *archē* is a realm appropriate only to the Holy Trinity, so the *telos* is outside of time and in the realm of the divine. The Holy Spirit is the Perfecter eternally, instancing perfection from *archē* to *telos* over created time from a position of eternity. In fact, this is what time *is* for Basil. It is not motion, as Aristotle and many others suggested.[182] Basil knows that the definition of time as the movement of the heavenly bodies does not satisfy the question because the proposition that time is movement cannot explain the day that motion stopped and time continued: "When Joshua the son of Nun was waging war against the Gibeonites, and the sun, constrained by a command, remained unmoved and the moon stood still [cf. Josh. 10:12–13], was there not time in these circumstances?"[183] Time is not the propulsion of bodies through space, it is the movement from *archē* to *telos*; it is not bound to the material movement, but exists over the material movement on a spiritual plane. In this way, Basil's exploration of time anticipates, and perhaps inspires, Augustine's extended exploration of time as a distension of the mind in his *Confessions*, book 11. When the entire course of time is recognized as contained by eternity at both ends, the designation of the Spirit as Perfecter loses any sense of incipient subordination. Only God stands outside of time, addressing time from the position of eternity.[184]

Anthony Meredith's criticism of Basil's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that he did not designate the Spirit a full participant in the all-important divine act of creation, but relegated the Spirit to the duties of sanctification, of moral perfection: "In other words the creative action of the Spirit seems to be identical

182. Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.7.11–13.

183. *Eun.* 1.21.14–16 (SC 1:248). Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.23. Callahan, "Time," 445.

184. The angels, although existing eternally and bodiless, do exist in time as their free-will devotion to God dictates. Time is necessary for free-will choice. Cf. *Spir.* 16.38. Brooks Otis suggests a three-level stratification of time: the eternity of God, the "hyper-chronic" time of angels, and the "diastematic" time of material creation. Otis, "Cappadocian," 109. I do not agree that angels are hyperchronic in Basil's estimation. He is clear that only God is able to view the past, present, and future simultaneously,and angels are not able to offer future prediction to prophets unless given insight by the Holy Spirit, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter. Basil's doctrine of time matches his cosmology: there is God and there is *not* God.

with the spiritual perfection of the Christian."[185] Meredith contends that the Spirit's designation as *Teleiōtikon* is not an indication of participation in creation in Basil, but is rather limited to moral perfection. The entire argument of this section has been to illustrate the closed system of time in the cosmos articulated by Basil and to explore just what Basil meant by *teleiōsis* in such a system. The role of the Holy Spirit as full Trinitarian participant in creation is manifestly clear under this understanding of Basil's doctrine of time, and becomes a clear proof for the divinity of the Spirit from Basil that depends only on what is known of the Spirit by its activities. It is another proof of the divinity of the Spirit in accordance with Basil's theological epistemology, and his avoiding the terminologies of divine essence so prevalent in the Trinitarian dispute. It would not be accurate, however, to dismiss Basil's concern for moral perfection and his view of the Holy Spirit active in the sanctification of believers and angels, but this need not imply subordination or any "defective nature of his pneumatology."[186]

To illustrate this, the exegesis of Psalm 104:30 and Job 33:4 can be examined. Psalm 104:30 reads, *When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground*. Basil interprets this verse in a fashion similar to that of Origen, examined above. Basil is faithful to Origen's exegesis in seeing this verse as primarily about spiritual regeneration.

> Resurrection from the dead is accomplished by the operation of the Spirit: *You send forth Your Spirit, and they are created; and you renew the face of the earth* [Ps. 104:30]. If "creation" means bringing the dead back to life, how great the work of the Spirit is! He gives us risen life, refashioning our souls in the spiritual life. On the other hand, if "creation" means the conversion of sinners to a better way of life (the Scripture often understands it this way; for example, the words of Paul: *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation* [2 Cor. 5:17]), and the renewal of this earthly life, and changing our earthly, passionate life into heavenly citizenship, then we should know that our souls attain such a high degree of exaltation through the Spirit. Understanding all this, how can we be afraid of giving the Spirit too much honor?[187]

Basil here ties the work of the Spirit to creation as spiritual regeneration, demonstrating that he will not abandon the ascetic spirituality of Eustathius and

185. Meredith, "Pneumatology," 205.

186. Ibid., 205.

187. *Spir.* 19.49.24–40 (SC 17:420).

Origen, even if he does considerable work to add another dimension to the Spirit's activity. One may regard this as a missed opportunity. If the goal were to associate the Spirit with the divine activity of creation, the exegesis of Psalm 104:30 could have provided Basil a much stronger statement of the place of the Spirit in the act of creation, but he emphasizes spiritual regeneration. Basil insists here on including the ascetical, spiritual notions of creation, as well as the creation of the order of the cosmos. The two principles, moral perfection and cosmological *teleiōsis*, are not totally unrelated for Basil and can be squared with one another, but what must be remembered is that Basil considers the human being a part of creation. While it is true that the human being, for Basil, is a microcosm of the universe and an opportunity for understanding "in yourself, as if in a kind of small ordered world . . . the wisdom of the Creator,"[188] this does not mean that the human being is outside of creation. As Basil reminds Amphilochius in a letter, "For since God is the Creator of the whole world, and we are a part of the world, God is our Creator. This knowledge is followed by faith, and this faith by worship."[189] The perfection of the human being is somehow related to the Spirit's work of perfection of all creation. So Basil feels confident in including the Origenist reading of this psalm in his own exegesis, knowing that the spiritual regeneration of the human spirit is part and parcel of the Spirit's overall work as Perfecter of the act of creation.

Job 33:4, *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life*,[190] certainly appears again to be a potentially fruitful verse for Basil's overall effort at associating the Spirit with the divine act of creation. In his earlier work, *Against Eunomius*, Basil engages only the meaning of spiritual regeneration: "And again, when Job said: *The Spirit of the Lord who made me* [Job 33:4], I do not think he was referring to when he was created, but rather to when he was perfected in human virtue."[191] But in *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil associates this verse with a cluster of verses meant to illustrate that the supreme titles of divinity are shared between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

> The Spirit shares titles held in common by the Father and the Son; he receives these titles due to his nature and intimate relationship with them. Where else would they come from? Again he is called the

188. *Homily on the Words "Be Attentive to Yourself"* 7 (Rudberg: 35; Harrison: 103). Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 8.2.

189. *Ep.* 235.1.14–17 (Courtonne 3:44).

190. "Πνεῦμα θεῖον τὸ ποιῆσάν με, πνοὴ δὲ παντοκράτορος ἡ διδάσκουσά με." Job 33:4, LXX.

191. "Οὐκ ἐπὶ τῆς δημιουργίας, ὡς οἶμαι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν ἀρετὴν τελειώσεως λέγων." *Eun.* 3.4.7–10 (SC 2:158).

> ruling Spirit, the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of wisdom. It is written that *the Spirit of God has made me* [Job 33:4], and that *God filled Bezalel with the divine Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge* [Exod. 31:3, LXX]. Titles like these are great and lofty, but they do not exhaust his glory.[192]

Job 33:4, then, can be applied either to an understanding of the Spirit as moral or spiritual regenerator, or can be cited as proof positive that the Spirit holds the title of Maker along with the Father and the Son—the title of Creator that is proper to the Trinity alone. In a sermon that is considered by many scholars as the clearest expression of Basil's pneumatology, Basil again refers to the verse and this time considers it a clear proof that the Spirit is the Creator, not the creation:

> Therefore, an intentional mischaracterization of one of those in whom we believe is a denial of the whole divinity. If the Spirit is created, he is not divine. But it says, *The divine Spirit is the one who made me* [Job 33:4]; and it says, *God filled Bezalel with the divine Spirit of wisdom and understanding* [Exod. 35:31]. Where then do you find access to the divine? In the created order, or in the divine order? If in the created order then you will have to say that even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a creature, although it is written about him: *His eternal power and deity* [Rom. 1:20]. But if in the divine order, stop your blasphemy and recognize the dignity of the Spirit.[193]

Basil says more than that the Spirit is outside of the created order in this passage; he allows Job 33:4 to make the claim for him that the Spirit is Creator along with the Father and the Son in the divine Trinity. In these variant exegeses, it is demonstrated that in Basil's mind the operations are united. There is no great difference between the activity of the Spirit regenerating the spirit of the Christian and the activity of the Spirit guiding all things in creation toward their purposed end. Because the human being is a part of creation and not separate from it, the perfection of the Christian is also within the purview of the *teleiōsis* of the Spirit.

In an interesting exploration of the nature of angels, Basil claims,

192. *Spir.* 19.48.24–32 (SC 17:418).

193. *Homily against Sabellians, Arius and Anomoians* 7 (PG 31, 617).

> The Word, the master craftsman and Creator of the universe, gave existence to the angels; the Holy Spirit added holiness to them. The angels were not created infants, then perfected by gradual exercise and so made worthy of the reception of the Spirit; but, in their initial formation and in the material, as it were, of their substance they had holiness laid as a foundation. Wherefore they are turned toward evil with difficulty, for they were immediately steeled by sanctity, as by some tempering, and possessed steadfastness in virtue by the gift of the Holy Spirit.[194]

The activity of the Spirit is part of the initial formation and material substance of the angels; there is no moment of their existence in which the Spirit is not operative also adding holiness to their very essence. But this is different from how the Spirit works among the saints, for Basil, which is the tacit implication of this passage. Human beings are created infants, and it is their given course to be perfected by gradual exercise.[195] It is constitutive of human nature to be perfected over time, and in this we share with all creation in the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is the Perfecter.

All that exists has come to exist through the Trinitarian activity of creation out of nothing. All that exists is suspended between the beginning and the end, between *archē* and *telos*, and moves through time from an intentional origin to a purposeful completion. *Teleiōsis* is not the subservient completion of another's act and intent; it is part and parcel of the creation of time as a bracketed and, as it were, distended, breach of eternity created by God as the occasion of human development and covenantal relation. The activity of the Spirit of God as Perfecter ensures a vision of the creation of the cosmos that is more properly and carefully Trinitarian than any that preceded and many that followed.

Illumination in a Theology of Nature

In this section, I survey Basil's own interaction with the natural order with an eye toward how the Spirit opens up knowledge of God from nature. Basil views the created order as a vehicle for knowledge of God, but he is careful in

194. *Homily on Psalm 32 (LXX)* 4 (PG 29, 333CD; Wagner: 235).

195. The claim that Basil requires the Christian to attain a certain state of perfection to be worthy of the Spirit's presence is, admittedly, counter to the general argument I make here. It is by no means a consistent doctrine in Basil and probably refers to the work of catechesis prior to baptism. Cf. Michael Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 124; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 299; Meredith, "Pneumatology", 204.

qualifying nature as an indirect, and necessarily mediated, source for theology. The Spirit must mediate between the order of nature and the rationality of the human mind in order for this vehicle of knowledge of God to be effective. The Spirit must illumine the mind to view nature as God intends. Therefore, this section will also point out the difference between natural philosophy and the theology of nature advocated by Basil, in which knowledge of God is found in creation only as mediated by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Cicero, in his *On the Nature of the Gods*, declared that the existence of a supreme intelligence who governs the heavens hardly required argument, being self-evident to any who contemplated their splendor and order.[196] Basil is confident in his writings and sermons that the natural world discloses some knowledge of its Maker, and he operates within a cluster of Scriptures that attest to the same, including Romans 1:20. In fact, two passages that are lynchpins to the understanding of Basil's theology and his doctrine of creation both center on Romans 1:20:

> Moreover, you will find that the world was not devised at random or to no purpose, but to contribute to some useful end and to the great advantage of all beings, if it is truly a training place for rational souls and a school for attaining the knowledge of God, because through visible and perceptible objects it provided guidance to the mind for the contemplation of the invisible, as the Apostle says, *Since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen . . . being understood though the things that are made* [Rom. 1:20].[197]

> But in our belief about God, first comes the idea that God is. This we gather from his works. For, as we perceive his wisdom, his goodness, and all *his invisible things from the creation of the world* [cf. Rom. 1:20], so we know him. So, too, we accept him as our Lord. For since God is the Creator of the whole world, and we are a part of the world, God is our Creator. This knowledge is followed by faith, and this faith by worship.[198]

The order and beauty of the creation are not random or purposeless, but are well-suited to reveal something of the goodness and wisdom of the Creator.

196. *On the Nature of the Gods* 2.2.

197. *Hex.* 1.6 (GCS 11.11–14; Way: 11).

198. *Ep.* 235.1.9–17 (Courtonne 3:44).

This is the basis for Basil's innovative project of preaching nine sermons on the six days of creation, that the "Master Craftsman" might be glorified,

> for all that has been done wisely and skillfully; and from the beauty of the visible things let us form an idea of him who is more than beautiful; and from the greatness of these perceptible and circumscribed bodies let us conceive of him who is infinite and immense and who surpasses all understanding in the plenitude of his power.[199]

Basil is comfortable, to a degree, in the confidence that the glory of nature will disclose something of the glory of its Maker. His opposition to natural theology, the view of God that philosophers develop from their study of nature, is nonetheless also clear. Basil claims that he does not study the world as the philosophers do, but attends to creation "beginning not with the wisdom of the world, but from what God has taught" in Scripture.[200] Whatever knowledge of God Basil expects to derive from the natural order, he also expects it to be mediated by God the Spirit and governed by the inspired Scriptures. The Spirit is necessary to illumine the mind.

A survey of the *Hexaemeron* sermons discloses Basil's delight in creation and how he draws lessons of moral and spiritual perfection from the natural order with the aid of the paradigm of Scripture and the presence of the light of the Spirit in worship. When Basil addresses the wonder of the diversity of plant life, and that every plant that exists has some useful purpose, he encourages his listeners to grow in their understanding of the glory of the Creator. After pointing out to any who may still worship the Sol Invictus that the Sun was brought into existence after the generation of the grass and plants and so cannot be credited as their source of life,[201] Basil expresses his own wonder and amazement at the innumerable variations of botanical life on earth. His limited survey of botany does not put on any pretense of being complete, but rather for a purpose: "I want the marvel of creation to gain such complete acceptance

199. *Hex.* 1.11 (GCS: 20.3–13; Way: 19).

200. "Οὐκ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου σοφίας τὰς ἀρχὰς ἔχουσα," *Hex.* 6.1 (GCS: 87.14–16; Way: 83). Jaroslav Pelikan points out, "This pejorative reference to 'the *sophia* of this world' was in no wise intended to remove from consideration the vast amount of scientific information that Basil himself brought to his exposition of the Genesis cosmogony, for which also Gregory of Nyssa commended him." *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 254. The phrase is clearly derived from Paul [cf. 1 Cor. 1:20], and is intended to reference the failings of the philosophical pursuit that ties God ontologically to the created order.

201. *Hex.* 5.1.

from you that, wherever you may be found and whatever kind of plants you may chance upon, you may receive a clear reminder of the Creator."[202]

There is no corner of the universe devoid of order and proportionality, "nothing happens without cause; nothing by chance; all things involve a certain ineffable wisdom."[203] Even the simple life cycle of plants demonstrates a remarkable wisdom and order in creation. The grasses provide nourishment for beasts, the seeds of plants are either protected by hard shells or by large leaves that shelter thick fruit, the same water pulled up through the root knows how to nourish the leaf or the trunk and may become by some invisible wisdom either sap or gum or juice. The same soil and moisture, in the inscrutable processes of botany, can grow into sweet bunches of grapes or bitter leaf; it can produce every color imaginable so that "you might see in one meadow the same water become red in this flower, and in another, purple; dark blue in this one, and in that, white; and again, exhibit a difference in their odors greater than the variety in color."[204] The remarkable sight of such variety, when matched with the ineffable wisdom of its continual order, must render praise and glory to the Creator. Basil preaches,

> Whatever long experience, by collecting useful information from individual incidents, has discovered for us, this was brought into being by the keen foresight of the Creator, which from the beginning provided for us. But, may you, whenever you see cultivated plants or wild ones, water plants or land plants, flowering or flowerless, recognize grandeur in the tiniest thing, continue always in your admiration, and increase, I pray you, your love for the Creator.[205]

The variety and beauty of the world's plants is enough to produce the sort of knowledge of God the Creator that at a minimum ought to produce wonder and praise.

In the same way, the marvelous diversity and order of the beasts declares the glory of God. "You see that the divine plan fulfills all things and extends even to the smallest," says Basil.[206] With regard to what must be an extraordinary sight, the migration of Mediterranean fish through the narrow

202. Ibid., 5.2 (GCS: 72.6–8; Way: 69).
203. Ibid., 5.8 (GCS: 83.8–9; Way: 79).
204. Ibid., 5.9 (GCS: 84.20–23; Way: 81).
205. Ibid. (GCS: 85.7–12; Way: 81).
206. Ibid., 7.4 (GCS: 120.3–4; Way: 112).

strait at Constantinople up into the Black Sea, Basil says "I have seen these wonders myself and I have admired the wisdom of God in all things."[207] The instincts and remarkable senses that animals display testify to the fact that "nothing is without order or moderation in all that exists, but that all things bear traces of the wisdom of the Creator, showing in themselves that they were created prepared to assure their own preservation."[208]

The creation of the human being itself is a remarkable grounds for reveling in the power and wisdom of God. In fact, in Basil's view the examination of the self, the human microcosm, is of more profit than the examination of the natural world for understanding God:

> In truth, to know oneself seems to be the hardest of all things. … Yet it is not possible for one, intelligently examining himself, to learn to know God better from the heavens and earth than from our own constitution, as the prophet says: *Thy knowledge is become wonderful from myself* [Ps. 138:6, LXX]; that is, having carefully observed myself, I have understood the superabundance of wisdom in you.[209]

All organisms, be they animal or human, produce in Basil's view a sense of the divine, a sense of wonder and marvel at the works God has done. It is only natural then to join with the psalms in praise of the Creator: "What words can express these marvels? What ear can understand them? What time can suffice to say and to explain all the wonders of the Creator? Let us also say with the prophet: *How great are your works, O Lord? [*sic*] You have made all things in wisdom* [Ps. 104:24]."[210] Again, to a degree, Basil allows that the wonder of creation tells us something of the character of God the Creator, enough anyway to prompt worship and praise.

The most direct knowledge that can be derived from creation is not knowledge of God, but knowledge of creation itself. Basil is interested in nature *qua* nature. He demonstrates delight and interest in the natural world and the

207. Ibid., 7.5 (GCS: 121.4; Way: 113).

208. Ibid., 9.4 (GCS: 153.17–20; Way: 142).

209. Ibid., 9.6 (GCS: 158.1–10; Way: 147). This exegesis stems from the Septuagint's Psalm 138:6, "ἐθαυμαστώθη ἡ γνῶσίς σου ἐξ ἐμοῦ," which NRSV renders from the Hebrew, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me* [Ps. 139:6]. Knowledge of the self is a classic theme in Greek philosophy that Basil incorporates here and in his sermon, *Homily on the Words "Be Attentive to Yourself,"* where he extracts from Deuteronomy 15:9a, "Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought," the Septuagintal phrase, "πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ."

210. *Hex.* 9.3 (GCS: 152.1–4; Way: 140–141).

animal kingdom. But this interest is also always bent toward the usefulness of this knowledge for illustrations and pedagogy. The understanding of the behavior of plants and animals can be used as an illustration of proper behavior for Christians. In the botanical sermon, then, the vine becomes a picture of the Christian life in relationship with God the Father:

> How many things produced by nature are combined in one plant! The root of the grapevine, the large thriving branches which hang down from all sides above the earth, the bud, the tendrils, the sour grapes, the bunches of ripe grapes! The vine, intelligently observed by your eyes, is sufficient to remind you of nature. You remember, of course, the parable of the Lord, when he proclaims himself the vine and his Father the vinedresser, and calls each one of us, engrafted by faith on the Church, the branches [cf. John 15]. Moreover, he invites us to produce much fruit lest, convicted of sterility, we be delivered up to the fire; and he constantly compares the souls of men to vines.[211]

Basil feels confident in extending the analogy that Jesus Christ established in his teaching. So then, if we are like vines then we submit ourselves to the care and horticulture of the vinedresser: "He asks us also to permit ourselves to be *dug about* [cf. Luke 13:8]. Now our soul is *dug about* when we put aside the cares of the world."[212] There is hope derived from the examples of plants for those who believe they are stuck in inextricable patterns of sin. Just as the farmer is able to alter the sour taste of a pomegranate or bitter almond into a more pleasant flavor, so is there always hope for change in those who earnestly pursue it:

> Some trees are cured of their natural defects through the care given them by farmers, for example, the sour pomegranate and the more bitter almond. The trunk of these trees is bored close to the root, and a rich wedge of pine is inserted in the center of the pith. This causes the bitter flavor of the juice to change to one pleasant to the taste. Let no one, therefore, who is living in vice despair of himself, knowing that, as agriculture changes the properties of plants, so the diligence of the soul in the pursuit of virtue can triumph over all sorts of infirmities.[213]

211. Ibid., 5.6 (GCS: 79.3–12; Way: 75–76).
212. Ibid. (GCS: 80.3–4; Way: 76).
213. Ibid., 5.7 (GCS: 81.11–18; Way: 78).

We, as creatures, learn from other elements of creation.

Basil launches into numerous illustrations from the behavior of animals, creating illustration after illustration of how animal behavior might inform good Christian ethics. The greedy person is like the large fish that happily swallows the smaller one, but all fish get the hook in the end.[214] Such behavior is to be avoided, along with any imitation of the crab or the octopus in their surreptitious attacks on their neighbors. Schools of fish are remarkable in managing their own space. Although they could wander wherever they wish, they remain close together and occupy certain areas without any need to expand their borders, as some shameless landowners do.[215] Harboring resentment and withholding forgiveness from one's neighbor is an imitation of the camel, who holds grudges longer than any beast: "O, you brooding ones who pursue vengeance as though it were a virtue, hear just who it is you resemble when you harbor resentment against your neighbor."[216] Bees keep themselves in remarkable communal order as they submit themselves to their natural leader, as good governance demands a king.[217] The resourcefulness of the swallow is an encouragement to those who are poor. It makes its nest of dirt and twigs, but nonetheless is able to care for its young and enjoy the attention of the Almighty, "for, if he bestows such things upon the swallow, how much more will he give to those who call upon him with their whole heart?"[218] Other birds offer positive and negative examples of good parenting. The silkworm gives a visual illustration of the power of the resurrection:

> Whenever, therefore, you women sit unwinding the product of these, the threads, I mean, which the Chinese send to you for the preparation of soft garments, recall the metamorphoses in this creature, conceive a clear idea of the resurrection, and do not refuse to believe the change which Paul announces for all people.[219]

These proofs are wonders, to be sure, but they say very little about the nature of God other than demonstrating the wisdom and harmony present in every facet of the created order.

The illustrations seem quaint, but as a pattern they begin to disclose a view of the natural order as a creation of God. Nature is valued as nature, and

214. Ibid., 7.3.
215. Ibid., 7.3–4.
216. Ibid., 8.1 (GCS: 128.11–12).
217. Ibid., 8.4.
218. Ibid., 8.5 (GCS: 137.12–13; Way: 127).
219. Ibid., 8.8 (GCS: 143.20–144.3; Way: 132).

also explored for a divine intent of communication. Basil is motivated to truly understand the process of the formation of a flower, the behaviors of schools of fish, the poison used by an octopus, and the instinctual memory of a camel, both because these things are interesting in their own right and because they say something about God's divine intent in creation.

Simply put, in these nine sermons is found one of the most critical and profound insights of Christian theology. While he does not explore it in depth in long theological treatises, the notion present in these simple sermons shapes the course of the Christian doctrine of creation and the development of the western scientific enterprise in ways that should not be underestimated.[220] Basil's exploration of nature in the *Hexaemeron* presents Christianity with an attitude of delight in the universe *as* the universe, exploration of creation *as* creation—a study of the universe not as a divine element itself but as a product of God submitted to our intellection. Basil makes it clear that the rationality present in the created order is not *the* rationality of God, but a rational order created by God for our joyful exploration. The inherent order of the cosmos is not the divine mind itself, as the Stoics suggest, nor is it the Logos itself as earlier Christian thought surmised. It is not the Worldsoul or the *animus mundi* for the Spirit of God is outside of the created order. The inherent rationality of the universe is a pattern of order created by God across an infinite ontological divide to serve the purposes of God in the relationship with humankind. When we examine the order of the universe, it is not the mind of God we see, but a product fashioned according to God's sovereign free will.

British theologian Colin Gunton draws a critical distinction between natural theology and a theology of nature that will help to illustrate the difference between what Basil is doing and what his contemporaries attempted. In a natural theology it is supposed that attributes of God can be discerned by human reason through the study of the order of the natural world, since the world is God's creation and bears the imprint of God's own mind. In effect, Gunton points out, this made theology dependent upon human reason.

220. "Science could not come to be until it came to be believed that the structures of material reality, the world presented to the mind through the senses, were intelligible in their contingent relations. . . . Without the doctrine of creation out of nothing which affirmed the rationality, contingency and non-divinity of the material world, the rational and experimental techniques which have brought such immense enrichment of human culture simply would not have been." Colin Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation: The 1993 Warfield Lectures* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2005), 57. See also: "It is this fundamentally Christian perception of the cosmos which opens the way to true scientific enterprise on behalf of man—a point of doctrine which St. Basil's *Hexaemeron* establishes in the most unpretentious and convincing way." Dragas, "Basil," 1123.

In his critique of Augustine's attempt to posit beings that are created but eternal[221]—an absorption of Platonic forms into Christian theology—Gunton argues the following:

> An immediate, or near immediate, relation of the rational mind with divine rationality was posited, and its effect was to replace a doctrine of creation mediated by revelation with one directly or indirectly discovered by the human mind. The mediator of creation is not *Christus creator*, nor, as we shall see, is the mediator of *knowledge* of creation the creator Spirit. In both cases, the function is displaced to immanent realities: the continuity between human reason and God mediated by the semi-eternal (and therefore semi-divine) forms. In this way the doctrine of creation was confused with natural theology, and became almost as a whole the discovery of human reason rather than the gift of historical revelation.[222]

In a natural theology, the doctrine of creation and indeed the attributes of God are the products of the engagement of the human mind with the immanent realities of the rational order of creation in which we live. This is not the character of Basil's project; in fact this is what Basil would call natural philosophy, not theology of nature. A theology of nature is one that begins with the premise that God created the world and seeks to make "an account of what things naturally are, by virtue of their createdness."[223] This is a pursuit of the inherent order of creation not as a pretext for making claims on the attributes of God, but for making claims about the nature of the world that God has created. Gunton argues,

> A theology of nature is the gift of biblical revelation, for it teaches us that the unity of things is upheld neither by the formal causality of the Greeks nor by the supposed omnipotence of human reason, but by the incarnate Lord whose work on earth was achieved in the power of the Spirit and in weakness. It follows that it is because we have a theology of creation derived from revelation—that is, biblically mediated revelation—that we can seek for the glory of God in the things that have been made.[224]

221. See, e.g.: *Confessions* 12.1–9.

222. Gunton, *Brief*, 45.

223. Ibid., 56.

224. Ibid., 59.

A theology of nature begins with the revealed proposition that God created all things separate from himself and just as he intended.

Basil insists that there is a difference between God and creation that disallows any sense of direct correspondence between the natural world and the attributes of God. Creation is not the involuntary profusion of God, it is not the shadow cast by God, it is not the accidental imprint of God's form in a material medium like a seal pressed into wax. Creation is the structure created wholly by God out of nothing in the exact order and trait that God willed it to hold. The critical passage quoted in various excerpts above can now be seen in its entirety:

> That it might be shown, then, that the world is a work of art, set before all for contemplation, so that through it the wisdom of him who created it should be known, the wise Moses used no other word concerning it, but he said: *In the beginning he created* [cf. Gen. 1:1]. He did not say: *he produced*, [ἐνήργησεν] nor *he fashioned*, [ὑπέστησεν] but *he created* [ἐποίησεν]. Inasmuch as many of those who have imagined that the world from eternity co-existed with God did not concede that it was made by him, but that, being, as it were, a shadow of his power, it existed of itself coordinately with him, and inasmuch as they admit that God is the cause of it, but involuntarily a cause, as the body is the cause of the shadow and the flashing light the cause of the brilliance, therefore, the prophet in correcting such an error used exactness in his words, saying: *In the beginning God created*. The thing itself did not provide the cause of its existence, but *he created*, as one good, something useful; as one wise, something beautiful; as one powerful, something mighty. Indeed, Moses showed you a Craftsman all but pervading the substance of the universe, harmonizing the individual parts with each other, and bringing to perfection a whole, consistent with itself, consonant, and harmonious.[225]

God is not ontologically tied to the created order, nor is the created order the involuntary outflow of God. We cannot assume a one-to-one direct correspondence between the created order and the rationality of the divine mind. What exists is not tied to its cause; "The thing itself did not provide the cause of its existence." What exists was caused by something outside of itself,

225. *Hex.* 1.7 (GCS: 12.16–13.11; Way: 12–13).

which remains outside—not pervading the cosmos, but, importantly, "*all but* pervading."

Nonetheless, what God willed to create in sovereign freedom can indeed be called good, harmonious, and beautiful, not because God is necessarily these things, but because God made the universe so. Consider how Basil fills this point out in his second sermon. The creation of the world is not the product of cooperation between God and other coeternal matter or forms, but is entirely and completely the free product of God's sovereign will. When we think of making something, we fall into our natural experience of seeing a craftsman work with material, shaping and forming it into a useful or beautiful form, but this is not so with God.

> God, however, before any of the objects now seen existed, having cast about in his mind and resolved to bring into being things that did not exist, at one and the same time devised what sort of a world it should be and created the appropriate matter together with its form. For the heavens he assigned a nature suitable for the heavens; and for the plan of earth he produced a substance peculiar and destined for it. And fire and water and air he molded variously as he wished, and he formed them into substance when the reason for the existence of each demanded. The whole world, which consists of diverse parts, he bound together by an unbroken bond of attraction into one fellowship and harmony, so that objects which are farthest apart from each other in position seem to have been made one through affinity. Let those cease, therefore, from their mythical fictions, who attempt in the weakness of their own reasonings to measure power incomprehensible to their understanding and wholly inexpressible in human speech.[226]

The rationality present in the world is not the mind of God, but the product of God. The way the created order sits in harmony and beauty is not the natural or organic result of the nature of God, but the result of the will and deliberation of God. It holds together in the way it does because God wanted it that way. It can, and must, be examined by the human mind. Indeed, George Dragas writes that the lasting legacy of Basil's sermons is the conviction "that man has the capacity and the calling to be a scientist in the world, and not as if the world was ultimate, but as being a means of communication between God and man."[227]

226. Ibid., 2.2 (GCS 24.23–25.8; Way: 24).

227. Dragas, "Basil," 1124–25.

Basil's own long and enthusiastic studies of the behaviors and attributes of flora and fauna prove this positive scientific attitude beyond the shadow of a doubt. But the universe is separate from God and does not immediately disclose God's nature, which can never be forgotten in Basil.

Therefore, the study of the universe itself can lead to egregious error and never-ending disputation. If Basil were a philosopher, he would have confidence in understanding the nature, or even the very essence, of God through understanding the nature of the world. If the universe were an organic and natural effect with God as its natural and organic cause, then the universe would disclose the nature of the divine just as much as a shadow reveals the shape of a body. This, in Basil's view, is the pursuit of philosophy. But Basil surmises that this pursuit is a failure. The philosophers, in their pursuit of God from the nature of the cosmos, continually come up with new theories and contradict their earlier findings. He writes, "If we undertake now to talk about these theories, we shall fall into the same idle chatter as they. But, let us allow them to refute each other, and let us stop talking about the substance [περὶ τῆς οὐσίας], since we have been persuaded by Moses that *God created the heavens and the earth*."[228] There is no consistency, and no permanence among the philosophers; nothing that would indicate that their pursuit of the knowledge of God has come to any fruit.

In this sense, Basil's theology is not a natural theology. It is not a theology derived wholesale directly from the nature of the universe. It is rather a theology of nature. The beginning of the discourse of discovering the nature of the universe is to acknowledge, by the revelation of God mediated from the Spirit, through Moses, and to the present church, that the world was created by God and is not God. As Jaroslav Pelikan writes of the Cappadocian theology of nature, "This was the God who, as the 'all-sovereign Maker of all things,' also filled the universe, yet without being identified with it."[229] The knowledge of God met in the Holy Spirit will shape the understanding of the cosmos when the natural world is seen in divine light. On this basis, Basil can encourage his hearers to "let the simplicity of faith be stronger than the deductions of reason."[230]

228. *Hex.* 1.11 (GCS: 20.1–3; Way: 19).

229. Pelikan, *Christianity*, 255.

230. *Hex.* 1.10 (GCS: 18.10–11; Way: 17). Cf. "For just as in the case of things which appear to our eyes experience seems better than a theory of causation, so also in the case of transcendent dogmas better than apprehension through reasoning is faith." *Ep.* 38.5 (Courtonne 1:89). Note: although Basil's critique of natural theology does not attain to the pitch of Karl Barth's modern opposition to it, parallel themes are worth noting. Both are concerned with upholding the principle that God is known only by God's

In order to preach effectively from creation in a way that aims only at "the edification of the Church,"[231] Basil must deploy two precepts: first, the mind of the hearer must be shaped and fitted for the knowledge of God by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit; and second, the knowledge of creation is governed by the Genesis account and other Scriptures—that is, by the inspiration of Moses by the Holy Spirit. Basil's theology of nature is founded and fully dependent upon his doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In Basil's argument it is necessary that the mind engaged in contemplation of the knowledge of God founded on the order of creation be itself shaped, tempered, and reformed—in a word, sanctified—in order that it may properly process the information it is receiving:

> Since we are proposing to examine the structure of the world and to contemplate the whole universe, beginning, not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant [Moses] when He spoke to him *in person* and *without riddles* [Num. 12:8], it is absolutely necessary that those who are fond of great shows and wonders should have a mind trained for the consideration of what we propose.[232]

The minds of his congregation were shaped more fittingly to watch plays, or athletic contests or other marvels, than to derive meaningful theology from the order of creation. And here we see that Basil's program of preaching from the six days of creation is not divorced from his scheme of defending the divinity of the Spirit, which in turn is not divorced from his program of ascetic monasticism and general Christian sanctification. They are all united in the promotion of the thesis that the Christian life is the life of a person made holy by the One who is Holy, the illumination of the Spirit of God.

The transformation of the mind by the illumination of the Holy Spirit is a return to the touchstone argument of Basil that the Spirit is holy and makes holy:

own divine disclosure. They both are "against any autonomous human inquiry into God, and the gaining of any knowledge of God on terms other than those authorized by God." McGrath, *Nature*, 263. Karl Barth writes, "One would think that nothing could be simpler or more obvious than the insight that a theology which makes a great show of guaranteeing the knowability of God apart from grace and therefore from faith, or which thinks and promises that it is able to give such a guarantee—in other words, a 'natural theology'—is quite impossible within the Church, and indeed, in such a way that it cannot even be discussed in principle." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II.1, *The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 85.

231. *Hex.* 7.6 (GCS: 122.23; Way: 114). Cf. ibid. 1.8, 2.1.

232. Ibid., 6.1 (GCS: 87.13–88.2; Way: 83).

> While both Athanasius and Basil do appeal to his creating function, it is the Spirit's enabling of human piety that plays the main role. The Spirit is the one who makes holy, went the favorite argument, and since only God can make holy, it must follow that the Spirit is divine.[233]

For Basil, this is a personal experience, by which I mean that it is centered on the human person:

> If we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source, it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge. He gives those who love the vision of truth the power which enables them to see the image, and this power is himself. He does not reveal it to them from outside sources, but leads them to knowledge personally.[234]

Without the Spirit, there is no illumination and no recourse through "outside sources" to the knowledge of God. In his exegesis of John 17:25, in which Jesus says, *Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me,* Basil contends that the Spirit is equally beyond the grasp of human comprehension. He points out in the course of the argument that illumination is necessary for a proper understanding of the world.

> Concerning the Father he says: *O righteous Father, the world has not known thee* [John 17:25]. By the world he does not mean the whole complex of heaven and earth, but this life of ours, subject to death and endless troubles. Concerning himself he says: *Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me* [John 14:19]. Again, by *world* he means those who are tied down by a material and carnal life, and restrict truth to what is seen by their eyes. They refuse to believe in the resurrection, and become unable to see the Lord with the eyes of their hearts. So neither the Father nor the Son may be seen by the *world*, but notice that he uses the same language concerning the Spirit: *The Spirit of truth, who the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know*

233. Colin Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 115.

234. *Spir.* 18.47.1–7 (SC 17:412; Anderson: 74).

> *him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you* [John 14:17]. A carnal man's mind is not trained in contemplation, but remains buried in the mud of fleshly lusts, powerless to look up and see the spiritual light of the truth. So the *world*—life enslaved by carnal passions—can no more receive the grace of the Spirit than a weak eye can look at the light of a sunbeam. First the Lord cleansed his disciples' lives through his teaching, and then he gave them the ability to both see and contemplate the Spirit.[235]

If the Spirit were a part of the world we study and know, a part of creation, then the human mind trained in earthly things and accustomed to earthly principles would easily attain knowledge of the Spirit and therefore knowledge of God. As it is, however, the earthly shaped human mind is untrained in suitable contemplation and is "powerless to look up and see the spiritual light of the truth." One would just as easily discern a sunbeam with the naked eye as derive theology from the principles of nature. They cannot expect to see God if they "restrict truth to what is seen by their eyes."

There is a necessary action of the Spirit in reforming the mind of the person so that he or she can look about the world he or she lives in and see the order that God has created. Basil continues,

> Since the Holy Spirit perfects reason-endowed beings, he is present in them in the same way form is present in matter. Such a person no longer lives according to the flesh, but is led by the Spirit of God. He is called a son of God, because he is conformed to the image of the Son of God; we call him a spiritual man. The ability to see is in a healthy eye; likewise the Spirit is working in a purified soul: Paul prays that the Ephesians' eyes might be enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom [cf. Eph. 1:17].[236]

Without this preceding enlightenment of the Spirit, there is no hope, no power, by which the human person might attain clear understanding of the created order. As Robert Wilken summarizes the matter, "Human beings can search the heavens, measure the distances of the stars, observe their revolutions, says Basil, but unless they recognize that God is the creator of the universe they will see nothing as it truly is. If the world is cut free from its creator, it loses its

235. Ibid., 22.53.30–40 (SC 17:442; Anderson: 83–85).

236. Ibid., 26.61.7–16 (SC 17:466–68; Anderson: 93).

natural axis."[237] The Spirit of God is himself the origination of the power of this realization; the Spirit makes the realization possible by illuminating the mind.

The second precept deployed by Basil for effective preaching from the order of creation is the precept that the Genesis account governs subsequent scientific exploration because it is the fruit of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Again, "not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant [Moses]."[238] Basil is insistent that what he is doing in his sermons is different from the endless and fruitless arguments of the philosophers of natural science because his engagement with the world is based on the revelation of the Spirit of God mediated through Moses. That is, the explorations are as founded in Scripture as in observation of the natural order.

In this section, it has been clear that Basil does present creation as an occasion for divine disclosure, a vehicle and source for the knowledge of God, but in such a way that requires the activity of the Spirit. Creation is not an involuntary imprint or ontological effluence of God, such that it is connected to God directly. But it is the intentional creation of God, and as such may disclose something of God's designs for us and for our relationship with him if the Holy Spirit illumines the mind to allow such a knowledge. Natural theology is not what Basil is after, nor natural philosophy, but the Spirit can guide the human mind into a theology of nature. God is only known by God; and as the Spirit makes God known in creation, the Spirit is God.

Veni Creator Spiritus

The Christian hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* is one of the oldest.[239] Legend attaches its origin to Ambrose of Milan, who was so moved and influenced by Basil's defense of the Spirit and by his sermons on the *Hexaemeron* that he imitated Basil in both. In its present form, it most likely originates in the ninth century, however, and has little if any tie to Basil. The attribution of creative power to the Spirit in the *Liturgy of St. Basil* must likewise be relegated to legend.[240] Basil's own work was not so direct. His purpose was to avoid contentious language, flee philosophical argumentation about divine essence, and illustrate as much as he was able a full cosmology evacuated of a world-spirit but

237. Wilken, *Spirit*, 141.

238. *Hex.* 6.1 (GCS: 87.13–88.2; Way: 83).

239. John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: Scribners, 1907), 1206–11.

240. Jaroslav Pelikan suggests that the invocation of the Spirit in the epiclesis of the liturgy bearing Basil's name attributes creative power to the Spirit who consecrates the eucharist, a point of contention in later conflict between the eastern and the western church. Pelikan, *Christianity*, 253.

receptive to the work of the Spirit of God from beginning to end. Nowhere does Basil displace the Son as Creator; nowhere does he remove the Father as the source of all being. But by demonstrating the dependence of the entire system of the universe on the Spirit, and by demonstrating the dependence of our knowledge of the inherent rationality of creation on the Spirit, and by associating the biblical notion of completion or perfection by the Spirit with the divine act of creation, Basil has established that the Spirit, too, is the Creator.

Basil associated the Spirit with creative power, and demonstrated the Spirit's share in the Trinitarian act of creation. While expositing Genesis 1:2, *while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters*, Basil makes a strong statement including the Spirit in the divine act of creation. The verse could simply mean that God created air ("wind" and "spirit" being the same word in the Septuagint) along with water, but it could also mean

> what is truer and approved by those before us, [that] the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God, because it has been observed that it alone and specially was considered worthy by Scripture of such mention, and there is named no other Spirit of God than the Holy Spirit which forms an essential part of the divine and blessed Trinity.[241]

The Spirit then was at the act of creation in its very inception, in the intimate Trinitarian occasion defined as the *archē*. But what role did the Spirit play in differentiation from the Father or the Son? Here Basil develops an argument beyond the Septuagintal translation. The Spirit was borne, *epephereto*, over the waters. Although he makes no recourse to the original Hebrew himself, Basil refers to a certain Syrian man whose native language is closer to Hebrew, who taught Basil that the Spirit was brooding over the waters as a bird broods over eggs, "imparting some vital power to them as they are warmed. . . . Therefore," proclaimed Basil, "from this there is clear evidence to show anyone who questions it that the Holy Spirit lacks for nothing in the activity of creation."[242]

A similar argument is found in his sermon on Psalm 33:

> *By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth* [33.6]. Where are those who set at naught the Spirit? Where are those who separate it from the creative power? Where are those who dissever it from union with the Father

241. *Hex.* 2.6 (GCS 31.1–8).

242. "Οὐδὲ τῆς δημιουργικῆς ἐνεργείας τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἀπολείπεται." Ibid (GCS 31.20–22).

> and Son? Let them hear the psalm which says: *By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth* [33.6]. . . . As then the Creator, the Word, firmly established the heavens, so the Spirit which is from God, which proceeds from the Father, that is, which is from his mouth (that you may not judge that it is some external object or some creature, but may glorify it as having its substance from God) brings with it all the powers in him. . . . In this place, therefore, the Spirit was described as from his mouth; we shall find elsewhere that the Word also was said to be from his mouth, in order that it may be understood that the Savior and his Holy Spirit are from the Father. Since, then, the Savior is the Word of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit from his mouth, both joined with him in the creation of the heavens and the powers in them, and for this reason the statement was made: *By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth* [33.6]. For nothing is made holy except by the presence of the Spirit.[243]

To separate the Spirit from creative power, in Basil's estimation, is to drive a wedge in the midst of God himself, to separate the Spirit from the Father and the Son in the blessed Trinity. This is inconceivable. The Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son with regard to full participation in the activities of God: "In every operation, the Holy Spirit is indivisibly united with the Father and the Son."[244] This is no less true in the activity of creation.

It is the unity of operation that illustrates the unity of the Godhead in Basil. The Spirit is tied to the Father in operation, and in this way the Spirit is united to the Father without separation. Basil does not abandon the role of Creator played by the Word, but in a bold Trinitarian circle, Basil ties the creation by the Word to its ultimate source in the Father, and then ties the Spirit to the Father directly:

> So then, even if we should believe that all things have been brought into being through God the Word, we nevertheless do not deny that the God of the universe is the cause of all. But how is it not a manifest peril to separate the Spirit from God? Particularly since the Apostle hands down to us that they are connected, saying now that he is the Spirit of Christ, now that he is the Spirit of God, when he writes:

243. *Homily on Psalm 32 (LXX)* 4 (PG 29, 333AD; Way: 234–35).

244. *Spir.* 16.37.18–20 (SC 17:374).

> *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him* [Rom. 8:9], and again: *You have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that comes from God* [1 Cor. 2:2]. Moreover, the Lord says that this one is *the Spirit of truth* [John 15:26]—since he is himself the truth—and that *he proceeds from the Father* [John 15:26]. But this one [Eunomius], in order to diminish the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, separates the Spirit from the Father and imputes him exclusively to the Only-Begotten in order to diminish his glory, insulting him—or so he thinks.[245]

Basil contends there is no "Spirit of Christ" separate from the "Spirit of God." The Spirit must be tied to the Father directly and not separated from the Father and the Son in the operation of creation.

No act of God is more profound and universal than the establishment of existence itself, the divine act of creation from beginning to end. Basil contributed to a discussion of the limited nature of created time and its contrast with the divine eternity. Basil contributed to a discussion of the necessary mediation of divine disclosure through nature. Basil began a discussion of the singular operation of the Trinity. He did not finish these discussions, nor did he plumb the depths of their metaphysical and cosmological consequences, but in his defense of the Holy Spirit and in his efforts to find ways to express the divinity of the Holy Spirit that avoided debates over terminologies of divine essence, Basil created new conceptual paradigms and accompanying theological lexicons that allowed Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa to finish constructing the Cappadocian contribution to the history of Christian thought. These conversations were begun by Basil in order to separate the Holy Spirit from the created order in such a way that it could only be understood to be God, the Spirit, Creator.

245. *Eun.* 2.34.20–34 (SC 2:142).

4

The Divine Light over Scripture

Having discussed the sacrament of baptism and the doctrine of creation, Basil also used his theology of the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture to argue for the full divinity of the Spirit. For Basil, there is something the individual believer receives in the engagement with Scripture, and what is received reveals the Trinity. This chapter explores the difference between Eunomius and Basil in their view of Scripture and its exegesis. It exposes Basil's relationship with his rhetorical instructors in order to draw from the lexicon of Basil's rhetorical background and demonstrate what Basil meant when he used these words to describe the Spirit. His proposal that the Person of the Holy Spirit must act upon the mind of the Christian to surmount the crisis of interpretation is an unexplored argument for the full divinity of the Spirit.

The words of Scripture are inspired by the Holy Spirit and given as a gift of knowledge to the church, in Basil's view. They are the final measure of the created order and provide the proper intellectual matrix for the exploration of nature. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Spirit's activity in creation and the Spirit's activity in inspiration are inextricably intertwined. The correspondence between the rational order of the cosmos and our ability to perceive and comprehend it is evidence, for Basil, of the activity and the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and this correspondence is located in the consistency between the inspired word of Scripture and the nature of the created world. By Basil's time, the argument that the universe is held in rational order is commonplace. Basil exploits this commonplace assertion to claim that the correspondence between the order of the natural world, the order of Scripture, and the order of the rational mind are only revealed by the process of illumination by the Holy Spirit.

Basil was trained in rhetoric under some of the most renowned and celebrated rhetors of the Second Sophistic movement. His exposure to this field of study provided a model in his mind of the good and decent rhetor, a model

that he used to describe the Holy Spirit. A good rhetor not only uses the power of words to move the soul but also works to develop the student by moving the student's soul in a proper direction. Having served as an instructor in rhetoric himself, Basil had a highly developed sense of the pedagogical role and a high regard for the power of words to direct the soul. His background and training in rhetoric did more to shape his hermeneutic tendencies than his affiliation with the so-called Alexandrian or Antiochene strains of exegesis, models which do not fit the Cappadocians anyway.[1] Basil saw the Spirit as a rhetor—the one who provided not only the words of the church, but their meaning and proper application. The Spirit, in Basil's view, provides both the vocabulary and the grammar of theology. Where other authors had expounded upon the beauty of Scripture and its language, Basil more deeply explored the Spirit's role as the master wordsmith of the word of God.

Basil commonly used the phrase "Word of the Spirit" to denote the Bible, and saw the Spirit as the source of the Scriptures, but he recognized that there was a stark difference between his own confession and that of his opponents. Eunomius continued to associate Scripture with the Logos as its source in ways that, in the end, isolated him from the rest of the church, and he never accepted the assertion that the Spirit inspired the prophets. Eustathius, on the other hand, called the Scriptures *theopneustos* but associated this divine action with the Spirit in a way that left questions about the full divinity of the Spirit. For Basil, the Spirit was the primary source of the words of Scripture, their meaning and authority both in its original inspiration and its "attentive" and "godly" reception by the reader. The text of Scripture did not pass down through history unaccompanied, in his view, and its meaning was not dictated by a rigid methodology of interpretation. Scripture is accompanied always by its Inspirer, the Holy Spirit, who applies its meaning to the hearts of those who are illumined within the church. Basil was aware of a crisis of interpretation, a deep chasm between a word and its meaning that he believed could only effectively be bridged by the activity of God in the mind of the reader, and he put his hope in the Spirit.

The Spirit Who Spoke by the Prophets

The purpose of this first section is to look at the traditional association of the Holy Spirit with the inspiration of Scripture and reveal the stark difference

1. John McGuckin, "Patterns of Biblical Exegesis in the Cappadocian Fathers," in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Scriptural Understanding and Practice*, ed. S. Kimbrough (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 37.

between Basil and Eunomius on this point. There is no more common association with the Spirit in the Fathers than the declaration that the Spirit inspired the Scriptures. H. B. Swete writes, "No work of the Holy Spirit was more constantly present to the mind of the early post-apostolic Church than his inspiration of the Old Testament."[2] That the prophets "spoke by the Spirit" was a nearly universal notion in early Christian thought. Inspiration of this type was for the most part extended to all Old Testament writings by the middle of the second century. When Irenaeus of Lyons recorded a "rule of faith" in the late second century, he included an article on the Spirit that reads, "…and in the Holy Spirit who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God."[3] Indeed, if the particular role of the Spirit was little understood in other aspects, the association with the inspiration of Scripture was commonplace. The phrase, "who spoke by the prophets" is found in many creeds and confessions prior to Constantinople and is accepted as an axiomatic Christian assumption.[4] By the time this phrase was added to the Creed of the Council of Constantinople (381), it "had a long history in creeds and went back to the primitive kerygma of Christendom."[5]

By the second century, the New Testament began to be recognized with the same sacredness as the Old Testament texts,[6] and the inspiration of the new texts was soon associated with the work of the same Spirit of God who had inspired the ancient writings. The dualistic challenge from Marcion found little purchase, but demonstrated the need to defend the coherence of the new Christian Bible. A litany of confessions claimed coherence between the law and the apostles. Theophilus of Antioch declared, for example, that the writings of the prophets and the gospel accounts confirm one another "because they all spoke inspired by one Spirit of God."[7] Irenaeus of Lyons wrote in the

2. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 381.

3. "Τὸ διὰ τῶν προφητῶν κεκηρυχὸς," *Against Heresies* 1.10.1 (SC 1.2:155; ANF 1:650). Cf. *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 100.5; and *Against Heresies* 4.33.7.

4. The undated Jerusalem Creed taught in catechesis by Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 350) stems from primitive Christianity and includes the phrase, "τὸ λαλῆσαν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις." The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed contains "τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν," while the original Nicene Creed did not. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Continuum, 2006), 184, 298.

5. Ibid., 341.

6. The beginnings of this attitude may be found in 2 Peter 3:15-16, which counts Paul's writings in and among the "other Scriptures": "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."

7. *Theophilus to Autolycus* 3.12 (PG 6, 1137A; ANF 2:220).

Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching of the "Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied and the fathers were made acquainted with (the things of) God."[8] Irenaeus wrote this work principally to prove the unity of the Old and New Testaments and their theology:

> This, beloved, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the manner of our redemption, and this is the way of life, which the prophets proclaimed, and Christ established, and the apostles delivered, and the Church in all the world hands on to her children.[9]

The same God who spoke in the Old Testament now fulfils the promises in the New Testament, speaking with one voice, argues Irenaeus, "for it is not a man who speaks the prophecies, but the Spirit of God."[10] This concern about the coherent voice of the Old and New Testaments continues well into the fourth century.[11] Cyril of Jerusalem addressed it in his catechetical training, writing that there is one Father, one Son,

> and one Holy Spirit, who through the prophets preached of Christ, and when Christ was come, descended, and manifested him. Let no one therefore separate the Old from the New Testament; let no one say that the Spirit in the former is one, and in the latter another; since thus he offends against the Holy Spirit himself, who with the Father and the Son together is honored, and at the time of Holy Baptism is included with them in the Holy Trinity.[12]

The Spirit is the one who inspired the Holy Scriptures. So, the personhood, the individual identity of the Spirit is the foundation for the unity of voice and ultimate coherence of what became the Christian Bible. Basil found, however, that not all Christians followed in this same trajectory.

8. "Sanctus Spiritus, per quem prophetae prophetaverunt et patres didicerunt (ea quae sunt) Dei." *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 6 (SC 406:92).

9. Ibid., 98 (SC 406:218; MacKenzie/Robinson: 28).

10. Ibid., 49 (SC 406:156; MacKenzie/Robinson: 16). Cf. 35 and 43.

11. Ambrose writes in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* that although heretics have tried to divide the God of the Old Testament from the God of the New, the Father is one, the Son is one, and "so, too, the Holy Spirit is one, who energized in the prophets, was breathed upon the apostles, and was joined to the Father and the Son in the sacrament of baptism." *On the Holy Spirit* 1.4.55 (PL 16, 718A; NPNF2 10:227–228).

12. *Catechetical Lectures* 16.3–4 (PG 33, 920C–921A; NPNF2 7:287).

Eunomius of Cyzicus did not associate himself with this particular stream of Christian thought. The unity and cohesion of the Scriptures is not founded, for him, on the personality of the inspiring Holy Spirit. Scripture is a product of the logic of God; that is, the Logos of God. Eunomius more closely associates the Scriptures with the Son than with the Spirit. He may have been resting on the traditions of Logos theology. In the Logos theology of the second century, the inspiration of the Scriptures was at times associated with the second person of the Trinity. Justin Martyr offered an extended defense of the truth of Christianity and the authority of the Spirit of prophecy in his *First Apology* based on the veracity of the predictions of Christ's life found in the Old Testament prophets.[13] In contrast to the philosophers, he argues, who are subject to incomplete notions and contradictions, the Scriptures speak with one coherent voice: the voice of the "holy prophetic Spirit."[14] This prophetic Spirit, in Justin, is also closely associated with the Logos:

> The Spirit and the Power from God cannot therefore be understood as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-begotten of God. . . . And that the prophets are inspired by none other than the divine Word, even you, as I think, will agree.[15]

The apologists of the second century tended to refer indiscriminately to the Spirit and the preincarnate Logos, particularly on the issue of the inspiration of

13. *First Apology* 30–45.

14. "Ἅγιον προφητικὸν Πνεῦμα." *First Apology* 44.1 (Marcovich: 94; Barnard: 53).

15. Ibid., 33.6–9 (Marcovich: 81; Barnard: 46). Leslie Barnard notes that this is "a difficult passage that implies that, for Justin, the Spirit and the Logos are two names for the same person." Leslie W. Barnard, trans., *Justin Martyr: First and Second Apologies*, ACW 56 (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 149n228. Theophilus of Antioch can be seen making the same association between the Spirit of prophecy and the preincarnate Word when he writes that God "had this Word as a helper in the things that were created by him, and by him he made all things. He is called *governing principle* [ἀρχὴ] because he rules, and is Lord of all things fashioned by him. He [the Word], then, being Spirit of God, and governing principle, and wisdom, and power of the highest, came down upon the prophets, and through them spoke of the creation of the world and of all other things." *Theophilus to Autolycus* 2.10 (PG 6, 1064C–1065A; ANF 2:180). Tertullian also seems to have associated preincarnation knowledge of Christ with the "Word, called his Son, [who] appeared in manifold wise in the name of God to the patriarchs, made his voice heard always in the prophets, and last of all entered into the Virgin Mary by the spirit and power of God his Father, was made flesh in her womb and was born from her as Jesus Christ." *Prescription against Heretics* 13 (PL 2, 26B). Cf. Kelly, *Creeds*, 85–88. Tertullian limits the Spirit's activity to the regeneration of Christians after the resurrection in *Against Praxeas* 2.

Scripture.[16] Eunomius may have drawn the association between Scripture and Logos from them.

There is no surviving example of extended exegesis from Eunomius by which one could examine his predilections toward Scripture. Claims are made by his adversaries that he is absolutely bankrupt in interpretive skills, but his friends insist that his insights are more faithful to the Scriptures than those of his opponents.[17] These competing views offer little help in characterizing his view of the Bible. A survey of his *Apology* reveals that he quotes Scripture less often than his counterparts, but that should by no means serve to suggest that his affiliation with the Christian Scriptures was loose. Philostorgius credited Aetius and Eunomius with "clearing the rubble of time" with regard to Christian doctrine, by which he could only have meant shaking off the accretions of tradition and returning doctrine to scriptural footing.[18] Eunomius was said to have argued on scriptural grounds against the perpetual virginity of Mary.[19] He also refutes Basil in his *Apology for the Apology* by charging Basil with unfaithfulness to Scripture through eisegesis, "shrinking from the witness of Scripture,"[20] and claiming that Basil perverts Scripture by bringing human names, words, and titles to the Father and Christ that are not found in it.[21] Eunomius demonstrates no less concern for faithfulness to Scripture than his opponents.

Eunomius came to Scripture under a different paradigm of inspiration and a different view of the knowledge of God than Basil. He was confident that logic extends from God to the human mind without interruption, that is to say, the same logic applies to God that applies to us. Eunomius subscribed to

16. Swete, *Spirit*, 49.

17. Photius declares, "Eunomius has no idea of charm and grace in style, but is anxious to produce pompous bombast. . . . An obscurity and lack of clarity pervade his work, so that most people feel the power of his rhetorical talent outruns their understanding, and he is able to cast a shadow over the weakness of his arguments (and there is a great deal of that) by unclear and incomprehensible language, so hiding the unsoundness of his thinking." Photius, *Bibliotheca* 138, in N. G. Wilson, *Photius: The Bibliotheca* (London: Duckworth, 1994), 136; René Henry, *Photius: Bibliothèque, Tome II* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), 107. Philostorgius, a sympathetic historian, has the same to say about Eunomius's opponents: "Their style as well in these discourses lacks all oratorical grace; their unclearness, verbosity, and impure language render them decidedly disagreeable, ridiculous, and untidy and give evidence of the darkness, perplexity, and madness of the soul." Philostorgius, *Church History* 6.2. Philip Amidon, *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 80.

18. The quote comes from Photius, *Bibliotheca* 40.

19. Philostorgius, *Church History* 6.2.

20. *Apol. Apol.* 2 (Vaggione: 106).

21. Ibid., 3 (Vaggione: 108).

"a kind of logic which we would have to describe as 'contentual'—logic, in other words, that does not merely summarize the rules of thinking, but mirrors the structure of reality."[22] Logic was not a construct of the human mind to Eunomius, a human way of thinking, but it was the act of grasping the nature of things as they are, including the true nature of God. He was concerned "to exclude what he regarded as Cappadocian mystification and to ensure that our Christian language refers, that our speech about God has a purchase on reality."[23] It is likely that Eunomius's idealist view of logic extended to his view of the Scriptures and their interpretation.

The historian Socrates takes note of a seven-volume commentary on Romans written by Eunomius, which does not survive. Eunomius appears to have filled the pages with discussion of the meaning and application of Paul's letter, but without any recourse to allegory or any effort to stratify the meanings of the language. His purpose in the commentary was simply to restate as clearly as possible what the letter says and apply its meaning to the construct of Christian theology. Although it is undoubtedly tainted with polemical scorn, Socrates's evaluation of Eunomius as an exegete is consistent with what is known of Eunomius' theology:

> Having no more than a slight education of the holy Scriptures, he was unable to penetrate their meaning. He used many words, regularly repeating the same ideas in different terms, without ever producing a clear explanation of what he studied. His seven books *On the Apostle's Epistle to the Romans*, over which he expended a great deal of labor in vain, demonstrate this. Although he makes use of an immense number of words in the attempt to unlock the scope of the letter, he is unable to penetrate it. All his other works are similar in character. Whoever takes the trouble to look at them finds a flurry of words and a poverty of meaningful thoughts.[24]

Eunomius operated on a singular plane of meaning and employed no allegory. His interpretations of Scripture were like a flurry of words vacuous of meaning.

22. Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 245.

23. Maurice Wiles, "Eunomius: Hair-Splitting Dialectitian or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation?" in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 164.

24. Socrates, *Church History* 4.7.6–9. Pierre Périchon and Pierre Maraval, *Socrates: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres 4–6*, SC 505 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006).

Eunomius was a flat exegete because of his confidence in the consistency of logic. There was no crisis for him when he approached a scriptural text. The meaning was to be read directly off the page.

Eunomius did not associate the inspiration of Scripture with the Holy Spirit, but rather saw the existence of Scripture as an effect of the Logos of God. He held a high view of Scripture, but preferred the logical term *apseudes* over the biblical term *theopneustos* to describe its importance. He writes, "In this way the inerrancy of the Scriptures can be preserved when they call the Son 'thing made' and 'offspring' [Prov. 8:22]."[25] As prevalent as the association between the Spirit and the prophets was in the early church, and as common as the phrase "who spoke by the prophets" was in association with the Spirit of God, Eunomius does not in any of his extant writings associate the Spirit with the authorship of the Scriptures, old or new. The phrase so prevalent in Justin, "the prophetic voice," is found only once in Eunomius's writings, in reference to John 1:3, but leaves no clue as to its association with God or source in the divine.[26] When Eunomius produces a confession of faith in three articles, the Spirit is not associated with the prophetic voice.

> We believe in one God, the Father almighty, from whom are all things; And in one only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things; And in one Holy Spirit, the Counselor [παράκλητον], in whom is given to each of the saints an apportionment of every grace according to measure for the common good.[27]

The Spirit is deemed by Eunomius to be a distributor of charisms for the saints in holy community. There is no mention of its relationship with Scripture.

Eunomius also views the Spirit as a divine Counselor and an effective instructor, but the Logos is the source of the Scriptures. Eunomius writes,

> He is honored in third place as the first and greatest work of all, the only such "thing made" of the Only-Begotten, lacking indeed godhead and the power of creation, but filled with the power of sanctification and instruction [ἁγιαστικῆς δὲ καὶ διδασκαλικῆς].[28]

25. "Οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ταῖς γραφαῖς τὸ ἀψευδεῖν φυλάττοιτο" *Apology* 17 (Vaggione: 54–55).
26. Ibid., 23.18.
27. Ibid., 5 (Vaggione: 38–39).
28. Ibid., 25 (Vaggione: 68–69).

Attributing a certain teaching authority to the Spirit is as close as Eunomius comes to suggesting that the Spirit is the source of the language of the Bible or the language of the church. For Eunomius, God the Word is the logical source of authority for the Holy Scriptures. In a passage describing the characteristic activities of the Son, he writes,

> What the Son is everlastingly is what he is also rightly called: Offspring, obedient Son, most perfect Minister of the whole creation and will of the Father, ministering for the maintenance and preservation of all existing things, for the giving of the Law to mankind, for the ordering of the world and for all providential care. He makes use of the Counselor as his servant for the sanctification, instruction, and assurance of believers.[29]

This passage is as near a doctrine of inspiration as may be found in Eunomius, associating the delivering of the Torah to the people of God with activity characteristic of the second divine Person, the Son.

When Eunomius was pressed to produce a confession of faith aimed at reconciliation in 383, after the Pro-Nicene victory at the Council of Constantinople in 381, Eunomius still did not recognize an association between the Spirit and the inspiration of Scripture. The Spirit, in this confession, is "not on the same level as the Father . . . nor is he made the equal of the Son," but nevertheless is held in dignity above all other creations since

> he brings to completion [ἐξανύει][30] every activity and teaching in accordance with the Son's will, being sent from him and receiving from him and declaring it to those who are being instructed and guiding them into truth; he sanctifies the saints, initiates those approaching the mystery, distributes every gift at the command of the Giver of grace, assists those who believe in the apprehension and contemplation of what has been commanded, inspires [ὑπηχῶν] those who pray, leads us to that which is advantageous, strengthens us in godliness, enlightens souls with the light of knowledge, cleanses our thoughts, binds demons and heals the sick, cures the diseased, raises the fallen, refreshes the weary, encourages the struggling, cheers the fainthearted; he is the guardian of all and exercises every

29. Ibid., 27 (Vaggione: 70–71).

30. Eunomius may be intentionally avoiding Basil's preferred "τελειόω" here.

> care and providence for the advancement of the better-disposed and the protection of the more faithful.[31]

In this confession, it appears that Eunomius has taken some of the insights of the Cappadocians to heart and found a biblical basis for incorporating them into his own doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit fulfills the activities of the Son in obedience and service to Christ. The Spirit ensures that the good teaching truly is delivered to those who are being redeemed and even does his own guiding, sanctifying, and initiating. The Spirit illumines minds with the light of knowledge, in Eunomius's confession. It is clear that Eunomius had been pressed to include many of Basil's primary concerns. As broad and as detailed an exposition of the Spirit as this is, Eunomius still does not associate the Spirit with the inspiration of Scripture. It is not that Eunomius held a low view of Scripture; in fact, the opposite is the case. It seems that Eunomius held to such a high view of the authority and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures that he was reticent to associate their production with the Spirit, being the third and lowest ranking participant in divinity and being a part of the created order.

In the refutation of Eunomius, Basil regularly referred to the Scriptures as the "teaching of the Spirit."[32] It is one of his most common epithets for Scripture. For example, at the beginning of *Against Eunomius*, Basil is challenging Eunomius's claim to have discovered (ἐξευρηκέναι) the essence of God. Basil asks where Eunomius could have gathered such knowledge, from common sense and universal notions?

> But these things disclose to us that God exists, not what God is. Perhaps from the teaching of the Spirit? Which one? Where is it located? As for the great David, to whom God manifested the secret and hidden things of his own wisdom [cf. Ps. 51:6], is it not clear that he confessed that such knowledge is inaccessible when he said: *I regard knowledge of you as a marvel, as too strong—I am not able to attain it* [Ps. 138:6, LXX]? And as for Isaiah, when he came to contemplate the glory of God [cf. Isa. 6:1-3], what did he reveal to us about the divine essence? . . . And as for *the vessel of election* [Acts 9:15], Paul, who had *Christ speaking in him* [2 Cor. 13:3] and who *was snatched away up to the third heaven and heard ineffable words which are impossible*

31. *Confession of Faith* 4 (Vaggione: 156–59).

32. "Τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ Πνεύματος" *Eun.* 1.12.10 (SC 1:212). See also at *Eun.* 1.1.13, 1.9.12–13, 2.1.25–27, and 2.7.1–2.

> *for a person to utter* [2 Cor. 12:2-4], what teaching did he leave for us about the essence of God?[33]

When Basil asks for a "teaching of the Spirit," he begins culling the Scriptures for chapter and verse. When Eunomius builds an argument from Scripture, Basil complains that he "pretends to have lifted these terms from the teaching of the Spirit."[34] Basil discussed the direct activity of authorship of Scripture by the Spirit more than eighteen times in the brief treatise. For example:

> To prove that this argument does not come from us, we will cite for these men the very words of the Holy Spirit. So, then, let us take the line from the Gospel: *In the beginning was the Word* [John 1:1], and the line from the Psalm spoken in the person of the Father: *From the womb before the daybreak I have begotten you* [Ps. 109:3].[35]

The Spirit is the voice behind John and the Psalmist. For Basil, the phrase "teaching of the Spirit" means the Scriptures held in hand by the Christian church as inspired, holy writ.

Eunomius never speaks with such direct relation between the Spirit and the Scripture. Basil understood the words of John to be inspired directly from the Spirit, writing, "The evangelist John, who was the last to write, after raising his mind above every sensible thing and time that is concomitant to such things, or rather after being lifted up in the power of the Spirit, approached the one who is beyond all things" and was enabled by the Spirit to write, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* [John 1:1]."[36] But, says Basil, Eunomius did not have any regard for the Gospel of John; "Eunomius has rejected all the testimonies of the Spirit [τὰς μαρτυρίας τοῦ Πνεύματος] and does not seem to have heard the one crying out to us over and over again that *he was*."[37] In fact, in the first two books of *Against Eunomius*, Basil invokes the Spirit almost exclusively to discuss the inspiration of Scripture. Until reading the third book of this work, devoted to the Holy Spirit, the reader might think that delivering the Scriptures is the only activity of the Spirit worthy of note.

33. Ibid., 1.12.9–22 (SC 1:212–214).

34. Ibid., 2.7.1–2 (SC 2:28).

35. Ibid., 2.17.21–25 (SC 2:66). See also: Ibid., 1.17.4–9, 1.18.1–6, 2.2.16–22, 2.6.37–39, 2.7.9–12, 2.8.7–12, 2.14.36–40, 2.15.7–9, 2.15.44–48, 2.17.21–22, 2.19.20, and 2.24.11–13.

36. Ibid., 2.15.18–29 (SC 2:58). Cf. 2.27.

37. Ibid., 2.15.44–48 (SC 2:60).

In Origen, the prophets spoke "by inspiration of the Holy Spirit"[38] when they displayed foreknowledge of the advent of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit illumined the mind of the prophets, as Origen writes,

> The prophets among the Jews, being illuminated [ἐλλαμπόμενοι] by the divine Spirit in so far as it was beneficial to them as they prophesied, were the first to enjoy the visitation of the superior Spirit to them. Because of the touch, so to speak, of what is called the Holy Spirit upon their soul they possessed clear mental vision and became more radiant [λαμπρότεροι] in their soul, and even in body.[39]

In *On First Principles*, Origen writes that the same "Spirit inspired each one of the saints, both the prophets and the apostles, and that there was not one Spirit in the men of old and another in those where were inspired at the coming of Christ."[40] He claims, in a passage retained by Basil and Gregory in the *Philocalia*, "And not only did the Spirit supervise the writings which were previous to the coming of Christ, but because he is the same Spirit and proceeds from the one God he has dealt in like manner with the gospels and the writings of the apostles."[41] It is an accepted doctrine of the church, in his account,

> That the Scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. For the contents of Scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things.[42]

Origen's concern was to argue for a singular source of inspiration for both the Old and the New Testaments, but in the same breath to include his argument for the stratification of meanings. These two claims are intertwined. The moment there is a challenge to the coherence of the Christian Bible, allegory is employed to find the strata of meaning at which the singular voice of inspiration is maintained. The Scriptures came from a single voice, and the voice was that of the Spirit of God in Origen.

Likewise, Basil presents the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament equally as divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. In his *Homily on Psalm 1*, Basil

38. *Against Celsus* 1.55 (PG 11, 761C; Chadwick: 51).

39. Ibid., 7.4 (PG 11, 1425AB; Chadwick: 397).

40. *On First Principles* 1.pref.4 (GCS: 11.7–10; Butterworth: 4).

41. Ibid., 4.2.9 (GCS: 322.11–14; Butterworth: 287).

42. Ibid., 1.pref.8 (GCS: 14.6–9; Butterworth: 5).

writes, "*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful* [2 Tim. 3:16], composed by the Spirit for this reason, namely, that we men, each and all of us, as if in a general hospital for souls, may select the remedy for his own condition."[43] All Scripture is the "teaching of the Spirit" and takes its origin from the Spirit's initiative. The letters of Paul are inspired by the Spirit and owe their authority to this source, since Paul wrote them "speaking in the Spirit."[44] In his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* against Eustathius, who claims to accept and even revere the words of Scripture, but belittles the person of the Spirit with the language he chooses to describe him, Basil writes, "How can someone who calls Scripture *God-inspired* since it was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit use language that insults and belittles him?"[45] The Scriptures demand honor because their source is the Spirit himself. The overwhelming witness of the early Christian church is for the position eventually codified in Constantinople, after Basil's death, that the Spirit "spoke through the prophets." This was the position of Basil during his life, but not of Eunomius.

Nevertheless, Basil was aware of a certain cognitive distance between the words on the page and their meaningful reception by the reader. There is a crisis of interpretation that requires a stratification of meanings if the Old and the New Testaments are to hold together in one coherent voice. Unlike Eunomius, Basil followed Origen into a multilayered reading of Scripture, insisting that there is more to it than just the letter on the page. This crisis of interpretation will be explored further.

During his episcopate, a widow had apparently written Basil asking for a visit and counsel after suffering a troublesome dream. Basil replied to her by letter, assuring her that "possessing the consolation of the divine Scriptures, you will not need us or anyone else to help you see your duty; sufficient is the counsel and good guidance you already have in the Holy Spirit."[46] Basil is reminding her that the Spirit is both the source of the divine Scriptures and is a very real presence in her life offering her counsel and guidance. Not only is the Spirit the source of inspiration for the divine writings, but also the Spirit accompanies them in their reading. She is not reading her Scriptures alone; the Spirit is present with her offering her the interpretation she needs. The Scriptures are the product of God, by the breath of his mouth, in Basil's view,

43. *Hom. Psalm 1* 1 (PG 29, 209A; Way: 151).

44. *Eun.* 2.19.20 (SC 2:76).

45. *Spir.* 21.52.75–78 (SC 17:438; Anderson: 83). Where exactly Eustathius quoted 2 Timothy 3:16 (or otherwise referred to the Scriptures as *theopneustos*) is not found in the historical record, but it is likely that Basil's quote is correct.

46. *Ep.* 283.12–15 (Courtonne 3:155).

and the same breath that inspired them enlivens their reading, enabling these same words to become the language of contemporary Christianity.

Words Have a Winged Nature

Basil drew from his background in rhetoric in order to deploy a lexicon of the Second Sophistic movement to describe the activity of the Spirit in the transferal of meaning through the Holy Scriptures. From Basil's biography it is clear that he came up against a crisis of interpretation, even in non-Christian texts, which he brought later into his spiritual exegesis.

Basil employs language traditionally used to describe the great teachers of rhetoric to describe the Holy Spirit. To understand what it meant to Basil to compare the Holy Spirit to a rhetor, we must spend some time understanding what Basil's relationship was with the discipline of rhetoric, and some of his history with particular known figures in the field who had an impact on him. Qualities and attributes used to describe these men and their art are employed by Basil to illustrate the relationship between the Spirit of God and the Scriptures of the church. When Basil began his rejoinder to Eunomius's *Apology*, he claimed to have little expertise for formal argument, writing, "We are entirely untrained in such forms of argumentation [εἴδους τῶν λόγων]."[47] But Basil had in fact been trained in "forms of argumentation," and his feigned amateurism is itself a rhetorical device. He had received the finest education of the ancient world, with an emphasis on the finest art of the highly educated: the art of rhetoric.

Basil's education had begun in Caesarea directed by his father. He was raised in a Christian household and educated under the auspices of Greek *paideia*.[48] His father, Basil the Elder, was himself a rhetor in Caesarea and exercised direct supervision over Basil's early educational development.[49] The

47. *Eun.* 1.1.16–18 (SC 1:142).

48. Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 5, 62. For a discussion of the authors and subjects (poetic, historical, and philosophical) likely to have been formative to Basil as drawn from Basil's citations, see Leo V. Jacks, *St. Basil and Greek Literature*, PS 1 (Washington, DC: Catholic University, 1922). *Paideia* originally began in the fifth century bc as a program of cultural development, not necessarily to educate the people, but to educate the leaders of the people for the propagation of Greek culture: Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, 2nd ed., vol 1, trans. G. Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945, reprint:1986), 286–321. For the Christian adaptation of Greek *paideia* see: Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). The original Sophist educational movement was emulated by the Second Sophistic in the first through fourth centuries ad: George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 230–33.

attitude of Basil the Elder toward classical education seemed to be modeled after the expansive openness of Gregory Thaumaturgus: that "the Christian could rightfully embrace 'every doctrine, barbarian or Greek . . . things spiritual and secular, divine and human.' All is to lead to the knowledge of God."[50] He learned grammar from his father, but the Christian faith from his grandmother, Macrina, who had learned it from Origen's student, Gregory Thaumaturgus.[51]

Basil excelled in his early education, which continued in Caesarea after his father's death. He subsequently traveled to Constantinople and then to Athens, the great center of Greek thought, to finish his development over the course of five or six years (c. 349–356 AD). During this time he studied rhetoric under the most renowned names of the Second Sophistic: Himerius, Libanius, and Prohaeresius.[52] Although he appears to have spent only a short time with Libanius, probably having met and studied with him briefly in Nicomedia in 349 on the way to further studies in Athens,[53] it is Libanius who had the greatest influence on Basil. Prohaeresius was a Christian and had a propensity for drawing students in from Asia Minor, as he was himself from Armenia.[54] Basil would have felt a strong affiliation with him by faith and

49. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.12 (PG 36, 509A–D).

50. Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 66–67. The Gregory quote is from his *Panegyric Oration on Origen* (PG 10, 1096AB). Gregory Thaumaturgus was the archon of Cappadocian Christianity.

51. "For if there are other things about me that may produce a sigh, this one thing I dare to boast in the Lord, that at no time have I ever taken up erroneous conceptions about God, or heterodox propositions that I later learned to correct; but from childhood, the perception about God which I gained from my blessed mother and my grandmother Macrina, this I have held with increasing conviction. I did not go from one position to another upon reaching maturity of reason, the things that were handed down to me through them from the beginning I brought to bear." *Ep.* 223.3.32–40 (Courtonne 3:12).

52. Kennedy, *New*, 243–251; Rousseau, *Basil*, 31–36. Along with their own writings, the best primary source for their biographies is: Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, in *Philostratus and Eunapius, the Lives of the Sophists*, trans. Wilmer Wright LCL 134 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

53. George A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 151. The primary sources are conflicted. Yves Courtonnes suggests this was one way to square Gregory of Nazianzus's omission of Nicomedia and Libanius from his *Oration* 43 with the inclusion of Libanius in Socrates (*Church History* 4.26.6) and Sozomen (*Church History* 6.17.1), that is, to suggest that Basil traveled on his own to Nicomedia for a short while before joining Gregory in Athens. Yves Courtonne, *Un Témoin du IVe siècle oriental: Saint Basile et son temps d'après sa correspondance* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), 47. Paul Fedwick suggests a tour in Constantinople between Caesarea and Athens in 348 or 349 where Basil heard Libanius. Paul Fedwick, "A Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil of Caesarea," in his *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 1:5.

54. Kennedy, *Greek*, 138.

by regional nationality.[55] Prohaeresius was well into his seventies when Basil arrived in Athens but was probably still quite active in instruction.[56] Curiously, Prohaeresius does not appear in any of Basil's letters or writings, and it is clearly Libanius whom Basil sees as the archetype of the rhetor. Basil had some success in his rhetorical career, and went on from his studies to retain a position as an instructor, but then abandoned the discipline in favor of monasticism.

Basil left Prohaeresius and Libanius behind. It is clear from Basil's later assessment of his move away from Athens and into his monastic pursuits that Basil had not found a mentor in asceticism, and this was growing more and more important in his mind. He longed to find a fellow Christian who had understood the need to discipline the body and nourish the soul: "I was praying that I would find someone among the brothers living this way of life."[57] Basil had come to the conclusion that the education in rhetoric was a bankrupt enterprise. Whether the classic rhetoric of Libanius or the applied Christian rhetoric in Prohaeresius, Basil had simply not found the *way of life*, the totalizing discourse he was seeking. He found it in the monastic communities of Eustathius of Sebaste.

In 357, he wrote to Eustathius, "Upon hearing of your philosophy I got out of Athens, despising everything in that place."[58] When Basil recounted his subsequent odyssey much later, circa 375,[59] he made it clear that he had found in the Origenist monks exactly what he had been looking for; these were no purveyors of empty words, no vainglorious aficionados of high culture: "I was amazed with them for their self-discipline, amazed by their endurance in suffering, astounded at their vigor in prayer."[60] Among them he hoped to find an instructor, one who would purge him of his former intimacy with the "foul discourses."[61] Basil wrote of that time, "I prayed that some mentor might be given to me to introduce me to the teachings of piety."[62] The glorious institution of Athenian rhetoric was no longer enough for Basil. He despised

55. Rousseau, *Basil*, 32.

56. Eunapius, a later biographer of Prohaeresius, met him in 362 and described him as vigorous at age eighty-seven: "At this advanced age his hair was curly and very thick, and because of the number of grey hairs it was silvered over and resembled sea foam. His powers of oratory were so vigorous, and he so sustained his worn body by the youthfulness of his soul, that the present writer regarded him as an ageless and immortal being, and heeded him as he might some god who had revealed himself unsummoned and without ceremony." Eunapius, *Lives*, 476–77 (trans. Wright, LCL: 485).

57. *Ep.* 223.2.18–19 (Courtonne 3:10).

58. Ibid., 1 (Courtonne 1:3). For the dating, see Fedwick, "Chronology," 6.

59. Fedwick, "Chronology," 17.

60. *Ep.* 223.2.23–25 (Courtonne 3:10). See above, chapter 2.

61. "Φαύους ὁμιλίας" *Ep.* 223.2.12 (Courtonne 3:10). Cf. *Young Men* 4.2.

it and entertained deep regret over the time that he had wasted in his youth in pursuit of that worldly wisdom, "the wisdom made foolish by God."[63] Basil had quit rhetoric in pursuit of religion; not only the power of persuasion gained by bandying about empty words, the "mere rhetoric" that Basil later claimed to recognize as mimicked by Eunomius, but also the full philosophy of Greek classical rhetoric he claimed, at least, to have left behind. Basil had become aware that there was a great deal of classical Greek culture that would need to be reconfigured to fit his Christian worldview.

It is an understatement to say that there is a twinge of regret in Basil's view of his time at Athens with its teachers. In his abandonment of the life and culture of Athens, and the subsequent resistance of it as he passed by Constantinople, Basil compared himself to Ulysses resisting the Siren's songs. Further on in the same letter, Basil compares himself to Tantalus, the fabled man who had stolen ambrosia from the gods, cooked his own son as a propitiatory sacrifice, and was condemned to Hades to dwell under a tree that would always keep its fruit just out of his reach.

Basil clearly had Ecclesiastes in hand instead of Homer in *Epistle* 223, this time written against Eustathius and the charges of heterodoxy against Basil by his camp. When comparing his own life to that of the Preacher, he reinterpreted his time in Athens as striving after vanity: "I had allowed so much time to be consumed in vanity, and had wasted nearly all my youth in futility; that is, my worthless busyness taking up the precepts of the wisdom made foolish by God."[64] The comparison with Qoheleth served to introduce a dramatic conversion marked by "a sudden clarity of vision, a sense of the need to reject one's past life, the inspiration of biblical texts, and a decision to embrace a generous poverty."[65] Basil moved from a life of teaching rhetoric into a period of monasticism and on to ecclesiastical service. There is a degree to which one should not regard Basil's academic life as continuous with his later career, but as the prologue to his ecclesiastical life—his pretheological moment. Just the same, Basil never abandoned the rich principals of Greek rhetoric that he had learned along the way.

We must be careful to discriminate in our discussion between "mere rhetoric" and the type of rhetoric that Basil learned from Libanius and Prohaeresius.[66] Rhetoric, from the period of the Sophists to the rise of the

62. "Ἠὐχόμην δοθῆναι μοι χειραγωγίαν πρὸς τὴν εἰσαγωγὴν τῶν δογμάτων τῆς εὐσεβείας." *Ep.* 223.2.9–10 (Courtonne 3:10).

63. Ibid., 223.2.4 (Courtonne 3:10).

64. Basil, *Ep.* 223.2 (Courtonne 3: 10).

65. Rousseau, *Basil*, 22.

Second Sophistic, existed on two planes. In one sense, rhetoric was the art of using words to produce persuasion. But in a deeper sense, and among all respected philosophers and instructors of rhetoric, it was a way of life. The technical art of rhetoric was not the highest art in the land because it imparted its practitioner with unmatched persuasive skill, but because it was the most powerful tool for democratic life together and the most powerful tool for justice in the arsenal of human capabilities. Rhetoric was at its best when it was not pursued as an individual capability or instrument of personal gain, but as a benefit for the polis, the life shared in civic society and culture. This is rhetoric as Basil would have learned it in Athens.[67] When Basil attacks Eunomius and his other opponents with the charge of sophistry, he means the reckless misuse of the power of language.[68] Basil argues that Eunomius's sophisms (σόφισματα) are actually inarticulate sounds (ψόδους), or empty reverberations of air; words with no content: "True religion is not found in empty reverberations in the air but in the power of the things signified."[69] Words, when detached from the power (δύναμις) behind them, the power that moves the hearer of the words, may yet have referents in language but they have no meaning for true religion. Rhetoric was a virtue, but mere rhetoric was useless sophistry and showmanship.

The first notable teacher of rhetoric for Basil was Libanius, the famous rhetor from Antioch. It is clear from Basil's continued correspondence with Libanius after he had left Athens that this man was a trusted colleague, even a friend, as well as a great instructor in rhetoric for Basil. The correspondence between Basil and Libanius is collected in Basil's corpus under *Epistles* 335–359.[70] In the course of these twenty-five letters, the relationship between

66. "Here rhetoric—not 'mere rhetoric,' but the formal control of central areas of public discourse—was a major tool. Through Christian rhetoric, as it was practiced in the fourth century, the cultural system implied by Christianity . . . might better become established and its future be secured. Language, and the control of language, are at the heart of the 'struggle' between pagan and Christian culture in the fourth century." Cameron, *Christianity*, 123.

67. Rousseau, *Basil*, 34–36.

68. In his *Against Eunomius*, "sophism" is synonymous with "blasphemy." Socrates uses the term in the same way when, in the midst of disclosing the epistemology of *anamnesis*, he opposes idle sophistry that leaves the mind immobile: "And therefore we ought not to listen to this sophistical argument about the impossibility of enquiry: for it will make us idle; and is sweet only to the sluggard; but the other saying will make us active and inquisitive." Plato, *Meno* 81d, trans. Benjamin Jowett.

69. "Οὐ γὰρ ἐν ψόφῳ ἀέρος, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τῶν σημαινομένων τὸ εὐσεβές." *Eun.* 2.27.15–16 (SC 2:112).

70. Many of these are now considered spurious. The *status quaestionis* was outlined in 1934 by Roy Deferrari, *Basil: Letters 249–368, On Greek Literature*, LCL 270 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

Basil and Libanius turns from open, friendly collegiality to outright contempt on Basil's end and ambivalent confusion returned by Libanius. These letters, along with *Epistle* 1, *Epistle* 223, and *The Address to Young Men*, attest to Basil's experience of a certain twilight of the idols, a crisis when the great icons of his youth and purveyors of his highest education and most delicate art crumbled in his sight.

Basil's correspondence with Libanius opens with a discussion about students he sent to learn from his former master: "I am ashamed to be sending you Cappadocians one at a time rather than persuading all who are at the proper age for seeking eloquence and education to employ you as the master [διδασκάλῳ] of their training."[71] Basil was enthusiastic to send his students along to Libanius in Antioch. He had obviously attained some position of authoritative instruction over students that included the responsibility of sending them on for higher education to various rhetors at the great cities. The natural suggestion is that this correspondence began when Basil took up a position as *grammaticus* upon completing his own education at Athens in 355.[72] At the beginning, Basil's praise of Libanius was effusive, and he apparently appealed to him as a great orator and instructor who may not remember him. We know of this attitude from Libanius's reply that he remembered Basil well from their short time together when he heard the young Basil contend with eloquence and sobriety against older men, "and that too in the famous city which teemed with pleasures."[73] Libanius even demonstrated that he was aware of Basil's course of life after that time, that Basil had gone to Athens and completed education. He took interest in Basil's return to his homeland and

2005), xiii–xv. He summarized the findings to declare 347–56 spurious, 357 and 359 dubious, and the remainder uncontested. Paul Fedwick accepts fewer letters as genuine, including only 335–41, 344, 346, and 358, but does not profess to close the issue. Fedwick, "Chronology," 5–6. Nonetheless, there is good evidence for the contact between Basil and Libanius as student and instructor and the impact this had on Basil. Letters exist in both the manuscripts of Basil's corpus and of Libanius's letters. Even the spurious letters still offer colorful commentary by later students of Basil on the relationship between Basil and Libanius. See: Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, 2 vols., trans. A. F. Norman LCL 478, 479 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), *Ep.* 19 and *Ep.* 78.

71. *Ep.* 335.1–4 (Courtonne 3:202).

72. The note in the Loeb addition suggesting the (impossible) date of 347 must be a misprint. Perhaps Deferrari meant 357. On Basil's position as *grammaticus*, see Robert E. Winn, "Revising the Date of Authorship of Basil of Caesarea's *Ad Adolescentes*" *GOTR* 44/1–4 (1999): 302; Ann Moffatt, "The Occasion of St. Basil's *Address to Young Men*," *Antichthon* 6 (1972): 75.

73. *Ep.* 336.1.7–8 (Courtonne 3:203; LCL: 289) in Basil's corpus, which is a letter to Basil from Libanius. The "hedonistic" city must be either Nicomedia or Constantinople, as Athens is mentioned as another city in the following sentence.

wondered how great a success he was at serving the courts or training young rhetors among the sons of wealthy fathers,

> but when some came and delivered the message that you were pursuing something greater than all these paths, that you sought out how you might become a greater friend to God rather than amassing wealth, I blessed you and the Cappadocians both; you for wishing to be such a man, and them for their ability to produce such a citizen.[74]

Basil's former instructor was aware of his preaching and Christian discourse, and took pride in it as worthy accomplishment.[75]

For Basil's part, the letters demonstrate a steadily increasing distance between his present life and his former practice of rhetoric. At some point, Libanius appears to have taken one of Basil's letters and shown it to a group of colleagues. Although Libanius reported that Basil's letters had been chosen the best among the writings contested at this symposium, Basil detected a patronizing tone and reacted,

> What indeed would a man of sophistry not say? Especially such a sophist indeed whose particular art it must be confessed is to "make big things small when he wishes, and to invest small things with great significance." I declare that this is just what you have done with us.[76]

That is, in making more out of Basil's letter than it actually was, Libanius reduced himself to sophistry. Basil is not vindictive in this letter, but goes on to explain that for his part, the barbarous language of Moses and Elijah has become his repertoire; literature that is "true indeed, though unlearned in style."[77] Basil suggested that whatever he had learned from Libanius, "with the passing of time, I have forgotten."[78] Libanius did not take insult, but encouraged Basil to pursue these books of inferior style and superior substance. He left Basil with the encouragement, in a stirring piece of Greek discourse, "With regard to that which was ever ours and formerly yours [i.e., the art of rhetoric], the roots

74. Ibid., 336.1.15–20 (Courtonne 3:203). Perhaps the messengers referred to Basil's baptism by Dianius in 357 after the tour of monastic settlements in 356. Fedwick, "Chronology, » 6.

75. *Ep.* 341 (Courtonne 3:209).

76. Ibid., 339.1–4 (Courtonne 3:206). The quote, from Plato's *Phaedrus* (267A–B), is an indictment of the art of rhetoric used for entertainment, rather than in service of the truth.

77. "Νοῦν μὲν ἀληθῆ, λέξιν δὲ ἀμαθῆ." *Ep.* 339.22–23 (Courtonne 3:207).

78. Ibid., 339.23–24 (Courtonne 3:207).

remain and will remain with you so long as you may live, and no passage of time could ever cut them out, though they remain almost altogether without watering."[79]

One other letter demands a word, and that is *Epistle* 359 (although its authenticity is questioned). This letter from Basil to Libanius drips with disdain and disappointment. In it, if it is indeed genuine at all, Basil charged Libanius with keeping silence at a time when even a word in a letter would have helped. Emperor Julian had issued an imperial edict on June 17, 362, which prohibited Christians from teaching rhetoric, grammar, or philosophy.[80] Christians were no longer to participate as cultural leaders. Implicit in this decree and the other religious emphases of Julian was the recrimination of Christianity as a novel and culturally deficient system of religion. Basil was deeply influenced by this event, and he would have looked to Libanius for support. In a stirring illustration, Basil writes, "if the office of *didaskalos* were a safe one" he would have "fashioned the wings of Icarus" and flown to Libanius himself.[81] Instead, his words fly to him in hopes of demonstrating a continuing friendship.[82] The words would have to do the work to restore the affiliation, but words, in Basil's view, were up to the task. He wrote, "For it is the nature of words to make plain the loves within the soul. So these in the end are the words. You lead them wherever you wish."[83] Note Basil's ambivalence about words here. Words can communicate the contents of the heart, but they can also be led around by the nose. The hearer may hear something different from what the sayer is trying to convey. There is an epistemic distance between a word and its meaning, as if the word goes up in the air when spoken and may not come back down to its target. The word takes flight from its perch, but needs to be guided if it is to alight again on the same spot.

Above all, the silence of Libanius vexed Basil, as he closed the letter, "endowed with such great authority, you keep silence. Very well then, transfer to us the fountains of eloquence that flowed from your mouth."[84] Basil did not

79. "Τῶν δὲ ἡμετέρων μὲν ἀεί, σῶν δὲ πρότερον, αἳ ῥίζαι μένουσί τε καὶ μενοῦσιν ἕως ἄν ᾖς καὶ οὐδεις μήποτε αὐτὰς ἐκτέμοι χρόνος, οὐδ' ἄν ἥκιστα ἄρδοις." Ibid., 340.23–26 (Courtonne 3:208).

80. This edict is preserved in *Theodosian Code* 13.3.5. Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 173–76; Brian Daley, "Building a New City: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy," *JECS* 7:3 (1999): 433–34.

81. *Ep.* 359.3–5 (Courtonne 3:219).

82. The Homeric image of the winged nature of words is a recurring metaphor in Basil's thought. In a letter to one of his scribes he writes: "Οἱ λόγοι τὴν φύσιν ὑπόπτερον ἔχουσι; words have a winged nature." Ibid., 333.1 (Courtonne 3:201).

83. Ibid., 359.7–9 (Courtonne 3:219).

84. Ibid., 359.9–11 (Courtonne 3:219).

live to see Libanius take up Julian's project against Christianity with force, but he did live to experience Libanius's initial reception of the cause and ambivalent acceptance of it.[85] What could sting deeper than the cold silence of a former master, colleague, and friend in a position of power during a time of religious discrimination? This is an obscure piece of writing, but suffice it to say that in the corpus of Basil's letters this letter is an apt illustration of the feelings that Basil must have felt toward his former master in the few years after Julian's rescript.

Basil learned from his tutelage under Libanius that words are important, valuable, and powerful. But he also learned that there are men who speak with glowing words whose actions would never match their rhetoric. When the gauntlet was thrown down by Julian, Basil would have expected a strong defense of tolerance from Libanius, but was met with silence. In the moment when Basil's relationship with Libanius would have meant the most, from Basil's perspective, Libanius was a man of empty words. When the supposed convictions were tested, Basil saw in Libanius a man whose words had no true power behind them; they were employed to distract, to confuse, to persuade, but they had no purchase in reality—and not because they had no linguistic referents, but because they had no power, no *dunamis*, to which they were attached. Words may be winged by nature, but only *dunamis* can put them to flight.

Prohaeresius may have played more favorably and more enduringly as a man of true conviction for Basil. Prohaeresius was more of a fixture in Athens than any other rhetor. Having taken the premier chair of rhetoric in Athens sometime shortly after 330, he taught the art of rhetoric at Athens for over thirty-five years, and did so openly as a Christian.[86] His renown and the impact of his rhetorical career were not at all confined to the Christian church. Here was a Christian serving his culture and his city with composure; like the pillar of a great bridge he was never pushed or pulled from firm belief by the turbulent waters of Athens. In the age following Constantine, Prohaeresius was not looked down upon for his adherence to a minority and novel religion. On the way back to Athens from a considerable excursion to Gaul at the behest of Constans, Prohaeresius was honored with the presentation

85. Kennedy, *New*, 249.

86. Kennedy, *Greek*, 138–41.

of a statue in Rome.[87] The Julian prescript of 362 was a defining moment for him nonetheless.

Julian's pronouncement would have had the most widespread effect on local educational institutions that were using Christian monks and priests to educate the young, and in this regard it would have been variously enforced according to region and local governance, having little long-term effect in the end.[88] But Prohaeresius was famous, and famously Christian. The question must have resounded throughout the educated world: Would Julian enforce his laws against the great Prohaeresius of Athens? Would even he lose his chair? Julian offered Prohaeresius a special dispensation so that he could continue to teach at Athens despite being a Christian. Prohaeresius declined the offer and preferred not to receive a treatment any different from his fellow Christians in this matter. He voluntarily resigned from his post in protest, but was convinced to return later that same year.[89]

Julian's opinion of Prohaeresius was high and he compared him to Pericles from the golden age of Athens,[90] tantamount to claiming that Prohaeresius was the embodiment of ideal Greek *eusebeia*, a model of all the highest claims of the Greek values of the golden age. Basil would have seen the suitability of the comparison. Prohaeresius was the consistent voice for rhetoric in Athens; he was a pillar of Athens in the fourth century and the very manifestation of the attitude of Gregory Thaumaturgus and of Basil the Elder toward classical culture—in thought, in philanthropy, in piety, the Christian way of life was the next logical step in the upward march of humanity. He was a man who demonstrated in his very way of life the vision of working in and among the culture of the day as a Christian. If there was anyone in Basil's day whom he

87. In Eunapius's account the statue was inscribed: "Η ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΟΥΣΑ ΡΩΜΗ ΤΟΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΝΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΛΟΓΩΝ; Rome the Queen of the Cities to the King of Discourse." Eunapius, *Lives* 492 (LCL: 508). Kennedy, *Greek*, 139.

88. Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 72.

89. "In the reign of the Emperor Julian, Prohaeresius was excluded from the field of education. It seems he was a Christian." Eunapius, *Lives*, 512–15 (LCL: 493). The crisis is also recounted in Jerome's *Chronicle*: "When the law had been given that Christians could not be teachers of the liberal arts, Prohaeresius the Athenian sophist voluntarily forsook the school, although Julian had granted a special concession so that he might teach as a Christian" (PL 27, 691). The crisis was also recorded by Orosius, *History Against Pagans*, 7.30.3 (although Orosius did not include Prohaeresius's name).

90. "Why should I not address the excellent Prohaeresius, a man who has poured forth his eloquence on the young as rivers pour their floods over the plain; who rivals Pericles in his discourses, except that he does not agitate and embroil Greece?" Julian, *Ep.* 14, in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol 3, trans. Wilmer Wright, LCL 157 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923, reprint: 1993), 34–35.

could emulate in the same way that Gregory Thaumaturgus emulated Origen, as one who demonstrated Christian virtue "by his own conduct" and taught "more by what he did than by what he said,"[91] it would have to be Prohaeresius.

Nevertheless, even Prohaeresius must have been something of a compromised character in the end from Basil's point of view, for he is never mentioned in Basil's writings, nor did Gregory of Nazianzus include anything about him in his recollection of their time together in Athens. Perhaps even in the principled protest against Julian, Prohaeresius failed really to provide an answer to the pervasive question to Christianity implicit in the crisis: the question of whether Christianity was sufficient in and of itself to be the religion of the Roman Empire. Prohaeresius was, though Christian, a purveyor of classical Greek thought as the foundation of culture. For Basil, culture needed new foundations. Under the ancient model of Pericles, *eusebeia* developed out of a deep sense of gratitude toward the city and its prosperity. Basil searched for a deeper, more profound source for *eusebeia*, one that could only be found in the Christian's reception of the Holy Spirit and the participation in the holiness of God that it provided.

Without surveying the entirety of Basil's education and career in rhetoric, it is clear that his lexicon for describing the Spirit as the author of Scripture comes from this arena. From his relationship with his two most formative teachers, Libanius and Prohaeresius, stems his understanding of the inherent nature and power of words and the importance of the one who uses them. Words have inherent dynamic potential, they have a winged nature, but they must be used properly and toward the proper end. Basil will develop, over time, the conviction that the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity uniquely devoted to the sanctifying and teleological application of inspired words in the minds of believers. This is demonstrated by matching his lexicon of rhetoric with his doctrine of the Spirit to reveal a new layer of Basil's argument for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. It is equally clear that Basil experienced a disenfranchisement with the field of rhetoric when he reevaluated his career course and the value of what he had learned and practiced for so many years. Basil left Athens searching for a new way to think.

Basil's *Address to Young Men* is illustrative of a growing awareness in Basil's thought of the need to be guided through the avenues of knowledge by some transcendent principle. It has traditionally been thought that Basil wrote this address toward the end of his life,[92] but recent analysis suggests it was written

91. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Panegyric on Origen*, 9.123, 126 (PG 10, 1077D–1080D). Cf. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 270.

earlier. Even if a later date must be accepted, the value of the oration is in its illumination of Basil's attitude.[93] It cannot be read as a disassociated discourse;

92. N. G. Wilson, *Saint Basil on the Value of Greek Literature* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 7–9. Deferrari holds for a late date, but imagines a seminary setting that hardly fits the letter or the historical evidence. Roy J. Defferari, trans., *Saint Basil: The Letters*, LCL 270 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 365.

93. I am convinced by Ann Moffatt's arguments against dating this writing to Basil's episcopacy, and I contend that the work belongs to the early stage of Basil's career. She points out that the two main arguments for placing this work at the end of Basil's life are false. First, the "τό τε γὰρ ἡλικίας οὕτως ἔχειν, since I have reached such an age of maturity" opening to the discourse (*Young Men* 1.1; LCL: 378) does not mean that Basil was an elderly man. Basil died prior to turning fifty, which itself was hardly considered an age of inherent wisdom. Basil must have meant something else, and the most likely explanation is that he simply meant that he had reached an age of maturity where he could authoritatively comment on their education process. I would add to her argument here by noting that Socrates was seventy years of age when he stood trial and appealed to his age (ἡλικία; *Apology of Socrates* 17C, 5). Basil could not have meant the same type of appeal to age by his use of the term while in his forties. Also, Basil says at the end of the address that he will continue to demonstrate these virtues to these students "παρὰ πάντα τὸν βίον, over the whole course of (my) life" (*Young Men* 10.7; LCL: 432), which implies a long road of life to follow. Second, the argument that Basil was writing for his nephews as an elderly uncle comes from the following sentence, in which Basil claimed to "hold the natural position in order that is next after that of your own parents [γονέας]" and to "engender no less good will toward you than your fathers [πατέρων]" (*Young Men* 1.2; LCL: 378). However, this does not need to be taken so literally as to indicate that Basil was the uncle of those addressed. He could just as easily have been referring to his paternal role as an instructor or a priest. Moffatt is correct that it is unlikely that Basil had nephews of the appropriate school age if this address was given in the late 370s. It was customary to regard one's teacher as a sort of second father, and father language was already prevalent in reference to priests in this period. There is no weight given to a late dating from this sentence.While I am convinced by Moffatt's arguments against a late dating, I concur with Rousseau (*Basil*, 49n94) that it is not necessary to see the address as a direct response to the Julian rescript of 362 because it actually would have worked to justify Julian's attitude. Basil's suggestion that pagan literature is valuable only as a substandard propaedeutic to Christian writing and thought supports Julian's claim that Christians should not be the ones to teach pagan literature! Therefore, I place the work sometime between 356 and 362, rendering it one of Basil's earliest extant writings and falling directly in the period of his own critical appraisal of his education and career in rhetoric. I am sympathetic to Robert Winn's most recent conclusion that it was written during Basil's period as an instructor (355–356), and it would be unlikely that it was written either during Basil's travels to explore Origenist monasteries or while at Annisa; however, Basil was clearly addressing students that were going to school to be instructed by others (not his own students; see, e.g. *Young Men* 1.1 "you who go to teachers each and every day"). The work is fitting as either an address given by Basil the instructor to students of some other instructional body, or as a farewell address marking the end of his rhetorical career and the beginning of his other pursuits.The following works address the question: Moffatt, "Occasion," 74–86; Amand de Mendieta, "The Official Attitude of Basil of Caesarea as a Christian Bishop towards Greek Philosophy and Science," in D. Baker, ed., *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976): 25–49; Erich Lamberz, "Zum Verständnis von Basileios' Schrift 'Ad adolescentes'" *ZKG* 90 (1979): 221–41; Ernest L. Fortin, "Christianity and Hellenism in Basil

Basil was obviously reflecting something of his own experience as a young man to the recipients. Although many scholars heap praise on Basil for his wide acceptance of ancient Greek culture and read this treatise as a manifesto of general humanism,[94] in its own right, the address is only cautiously receptive to extra-Christian literature. Something of a crisis is welling up in Basil and he is no longer certain that the broad-minded acceptance of classical Greek culture that he learned from his father is still appropriate for a developing Christian mind.

Basil wanted to give his students a principle of discrimination whereby they learned to sift pagan material, to cull what was beneficial and expel what was harmful. As any parent knows, it is more important to instill an ability to discern right and wrong in children than to demand unflinching obedience. Basil was not enforcing a strict curriculum in this address so much as promoting the development of an internal gauge, a principle of discrimination that allowed the student to pass over what is bad and glean what is good from any piece of writing. As Eric Lamberz points out, "[Basil] nowhere speaks with a selected curriculum in mind, as though certain texts would have been excluded. . . . If one wishes to use the word selection, then this may only occur in the sense of selection-for-oneself, self-discretion."[95] Basil presupposed students would be faced with texts that they themselves needed to sort through, mixed texts that would include both helpful and damaging content. They would need their own, solid principle of discrimination. This is the type of ability Basil wanted to promote among students, warning them,

> It is not necessary for you to immediately surrender the rudders of your minds, like that of a ship, so that you follow wherever these things should lead. Instead, receiving whatever is profitable out of them, you need to recognize what must be disregarded. So then, what these things are and how they are to be discerned, this is what I will teach you in what follows.[96]

The power to discriminate between helpful and harmful texts must not be handed over to another, but developed to full strength in each student. Basil

the Great's Address *Ad Adulescentes*," in H. J. Blumenthal and R. A. Markus, *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Theology* (London: Variorum, 1981): 189–203; Fedwick, "Chronology," 18, who summarizes the arguments but does not render a date; and Winn, "Revising," 291–307.

94. "Accordingly, Basil's attitude towards the pagan classics appears as the most enlightened and well-balanced of his time." Defferari, *Basil*, LCL 270, 370.

95. Lamberz, "Verständnis," 82.

96. *Young Men* 1.5 (PG 31, 565A; LCL: 380)

offered instruction not in what literature to read and what to pass over, but how to discriminate between what is useful and what is worthless in any text.

The young Christian student reading pagan literature must draw out what is good and leave what is bad. Basil's address is full of colorful metaphors, like the rudder illustration above, that made the point. In one passage, he compared the activity to the behavior of bees: "They do not approach all flowers equally, nor do they try to carry of entirely the ones that they land on, but they take away whatever is suitable for their works and dismiss the remainder untouched."[97] Basil wanted these students to be able to flit from Homer to Hesiod and back, taking only what profited the soul and leaving the remainder untouched, like a bee alighting from flower to flower or a careful gardener plucking the bloom from the rose but leaving the thorns. But these illustrations leave Basil open to the primary criticism of the work, namely, how is the student expected to know the difference between the good and the bad?[98] Basil is struggling at this point in his career with a crisis of interpretation. He wishes he could provide a methodology, an exegetical pattern, that would allow his students to sift classical material and benefit from it, but there is no set methodology to employ. It has to happen in the mind and heart of the individual; it has to remain subjective.

In his effort to find a methodology, he proposes that his students focus on what is spiritual. It seems that Basil's chief discriminating factor was the opposition of body and soul.[99] The body must be subdued so that the soul can expand and flourish. The classical writings of Greek literature can all serve this end in their own way: to instill supremacy of the eternal soul to the mortal body. Virtue (ἀρετή) itself is treated by Basil as a spiritual force, having its own gravity and power of self-disclosure. Hesiod praised virtue, and Homer's writings could be summarized as "an encomium of virtue."[100] Since virtue was the goal and guiding principle of life, it is incumbent upon the student to begin to develop it as soon as possible. As the student practices discrimination in moving through readings and exercises, Basil instructs them to judge a reading

97. *Young Men* 4.8 (LCL: 390).

98. Rousseau, *Basil*, 51–2.

99. J. David Dawson argues Origen's theology is "a spiritualization, not a rejection, of the body." *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 65. At its best, the tradition of Christian practice that followed Origen would resist the outright rejection of the body and recognize that corruptible and corrosive "flesh" is the enemy of virtue, but the body itself is a good to be redeemed in the end. Nevertheless Origenist monasticism often fell into antisomatic patterns, and Basil struggles at times to remember any virtue of the human body (perhaps because his own body continually failed him with poor health).

100. *Young Men* 5.3, 6 (LCL: 392, 394).

helpful for virtue if it helps the student exercise the mind toward spiritual things, "so much as the soul is more praiseworthy than the body in every respect."[101]

The literature of the classical Greek world was beneficial as long as it offered training for the eyes of the soul and drove the mind toward the spiritual and away from the material. In a passage that moves far beyond the spiritual idealism of Plato or the consummate wisdom of Solon, Basil tells his students to despise every bit of "this human life" and not to class anything as "good" that augments or attends the present life in the flesh,

> neither family reputation, nor strength of body, nor beauty, nor greatness, nor the praises of all mankind or royal rule itself, nor any other element of humanity that might be said to be great we judge not worthy even of praying for or gazing at those who have them, but we are led by hope into what is greater and all we do is practice for another life.[102]

In this longing for afterlife, Basil demonstrates that he has moved beyond the classical Greek adulation of the perfect human body. Family, beauty, strength, reputation, these were the watchwords of Greek virtue and the desire for these things was what drove a citizen into responsible and pious life in the city. But Basil drove his students beyond the present, beyond the life in the body, to a higher spiritual pursuit.

It is not total disembodiment that Basil sets up as ideal, but the priority of spirit to flesh in every respect, just as Pericles and Socrates pressed their bodies into positions of service and submission to others.[103] The body should be considered only inasmuch as it can serve to augment the soul. Basil taught that the body should be pressed into submission by the greater powers of the mind, the spiritual powers.[104] In this regard, Basil sees no difference between Paul and Plato, namely that the body is "in one word, to be disregarded entirely by those who do not wish to be buried in his pleasures, as in slime."[105] Basil felt that the classics of Greek literature and philosophy could aid the student in this respect, that they would learn to disdain the temporary beauties and strengths of the physical body and begin to look toward the spiritual realm and the life that

101. Ibid., 2.5 (LCL: 382).

102. Ibid., 2.2 (LCL: 380). Cf. *Concerning Baptism* 1.1, where Basil expounds upon Matthew 10:37 and explains that all worldly ties, even family ties, must be loosed for the sake of the eternal life to come.

103. *Young Men* 7.1–8 (LCL: 400–7).

104. *Homily on the Verse: 'Pay Attention to Yourself'* 3; *Ep.* 2.

105. *Young Men* 9.12 (LCL: 420).

is eternal. Basil's sentiments might be matched to Origen's in this regard. The body was not entirely to be disdained, but it was to be taken up and absorbed into a spiritual stratum of meaning.

Basil wanted his students to be led to the spiritual realms, even as they trained their minds with Greek literature. Nothing, however, would be more powerful in leading the soul into the spiritual realms than the divine Scriptures: "Indeed the divine Scriptures lead us into this place, instructing us through ineffable mysteries."[106] Basil does not expect the recipients of his address to understand what he means by this, but he wants them to be able to see the basic shape of the deeper meanings of Scripture, "as if in a shadow or reflection,"[107] until they grow older and are able to discern the mysteries with more reverence. The young monk of Cappadocia looked forward to a day when Christians would learn all they needed to know from "our own literature," meaning not just the Bible, but other writings as well, "but as it stands now, let us trace out as much of a shadowgraph of virtue as we can from the outside teachings."[108] This temporary compromise was dangerous, however, in Basil's view, and the principle of discrimination had to be employed. Words had the power to lead the soul, the ability to move the soul in one way or another, as he warned, "for an intimacy with foul words is a kind of path leading toward the deeds."[109]

What is important here is to notice the crisis of interpretation of classic literature that Basil has bumped up against and the ultimate insolvency of his proposal. This writing stems from precisely the moment when Basil was moving away from his career in rhetoric. Noticeably absent is any mention of the Holy Spirit as the one who completes the education of the Christian, or leads him or her through the ineffable mysteries into participation with God. This sort of idea, so prevalent in later works, was not yet expressed by Basil. However, there was the burgeoning emphasis on the spiritual. Basil was developing a longing for spiritual development that emphasized the spirit and the spiritual—a longing for a transcendent principle active in the reader that could hover over the texts and summon the virtuous reading, the virtuous meaning. Basil is convinced that Scripture is the unique collection of spiritual

106. Ibid., 2.5–6 (PG 31, 565D; LCL: 382).

107. Ibid., 2.6 (LCL: 382; PG 31, 565D).

108. "Ὅσον δὲ σκιαγραφίαν τινὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς." Ibid., 10.1 (PG 31, 588B; LCL: 428–30). Basil seems to intimate that he hopes for a time when external literature will be replaced entirely by Christian writings, perhaps referring to Gregory of Nazianzus's efforts at biblically based epic poetry or Apollinarius's bold efforts to render the Scriptures "in the style and form of Greek literature." Wilken, *Romans*, 175. Cf. Sozomen, *History*, 5.18.

109. *Young Men* 4.2 (PG 31, 568D–569A; LCL: 388).

words that can lead the soul to virtue, but a further transcendent responsibility is necessary. Basil is not yet ready to rest this responsibility on the person of the Holy Spirit, but there is one more chapter to the crisis that would render all of Basil's lingering confidence in rhetoric bankrupt and push him confidently toward the continuous work of illumination by the Spirit as the final solution.

What then of the claim of incompetence Basil made in his opening parley against Eunomius? Basil appears disingenuous, to say the least, to have claimed that he was "entirely untrained in such forms of argumentation." His biography demonstrates that he was trained by the best and even took up instruction in the art of rhetoric before his turn toward a life of ministry. There are three possibilities that could explain Basil's claim. First, it is possible that Basil was engaging in dissimilation. It may have been Basil's intention all along for the treatise to be copied and read. It would help his argument if his reader began with low expectations for success and was pleasantly surprised when he found moments of adequate argumentation in the text that followed. Secondly, there is at least the possibility that the entire treatise, *Against Eunomius*, was written as an oratorical script, for Eustathius as he traveled to Lampsacus to confront Aetius and Eunomius in 364. Basil may have been writing the whole thing for them, and in their voice, not his own. Eustathius could likely have held the claim to be untrained better than Basil could. This theory is given very little consideration in secondary sources, and I give it no more consideration here.[110] The third option is to surmise that something happened that rattled Basil deeply. Something occurred that irreparably destroyed any lingering confidence he may have held in the art of rhetoric: namely, the planned confrontation with Aetius and Eunomius at Constantinople in 360. Basil was brought to this council to debate Eunomius face-to-face, but for one reason or another, Basil left the council without saying a word and retreated to his family's estate. Thomas Kopecek hints at the various emotions that must have been involved in this momentous encounter between Basil of Ancyra, Eustathius of Sebaste, the young Basil of Caesarea and the formidable opponents from Constantinople, Aetius and Eunomius.[111] A few years later, when Basil had regrouped and had a

110. Rousseau, *Basil*, 102; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 232–33. The theory comes from speculation of a deeper meaning to Basil's *Ep.* 223.5, where Basil reminded Eustathius of their former affinity for one another, and how Eustathius and his scribes were present when Basil dictated his objections to the (Eunomian and Aetian) heresy when they were preparing for the council at Lampsacus of 364.

111. "It probably was Eustathius who was responsible for Basil's presence at Constantinople and who was most disappointed when the Athens-educated young ascetic was unwilling to debate with Deacons Aetius and Eunomius. If so, Eustathius must have been even more disappointed when Basil actually left the council to return to his Pontic ascetical retreat on his family's estate. But although Basil had decided to leave the practical problems of deliberating ecclesiastical dogma to others, there is substantial evidence

chance to measure and assess the *Apology* of Eunomius, he began his discourse explaining that the "forms of argumentation," the art of rhetoric for which he had begun to draw acclaim in his younger years, were no longer of any use to him. They had failed him when he needed them most, and though he would run the course of his life with these roots of rhetoric inextricably planted in the soil of his heart (and even bearing heavy fruit), he would place no confidence in them any longer. His pursuit had turned away from rhetoric, and toward distinctively Christian *eusebeia*.

Having been so rattled and shaken by the failure at Constantinople, the Julian rescript in 362 must have been the nail in the coffin for Basil's prior career.[112] The crisis of interpretation was now reaching its breaking point. Basil and his colleagues were wondering if the whole enterprise of classical rhetoric would have to be rebuilt from the ground up in Christian terms and with Christian Scriptures. Some even attempted the reconstruction. Christians were accused of not discerning the meaning of classical texts, and secular Greeks, as it seems, could not discern the meaning of the Christian Scriptures. The crisis of interpretation cut both ways. A spurious interchange between Basil and Julian (*Epistles* 40 and 41) is actually a surviving remnant of a work of Appolinarius called *The Truth*, and still belongs to this chapter in history. The emperor claims, "What I have read, I have understood, and I have condemned." The respondent argues, "You have read, but you have not understood, or you would not have condemned."[113] Interpretation begins to seem an impossible task.

From the chapter in Basil's life that was devoted to rhetoric, certain terms emerge that Basil renders anew in his pneumatology. Turning now to these, it is possible to see that Basil's language about the Spirit is drawn from his lexicon of rhetoric. The Spirit becomes Basil's solution to the crisis of interpretation—a crisis that God alone can resolve.

Basil's Spiritual Exegesis

Basil's hermeneutic of Scripture is dependent on the activity of the Holy Spirit to bridge the interpretive crisis between the presented word and the

that he was vitally interested in the outcome of the deliberations." Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 361–62. Cf. 300–1.

112. I am grateful for a conversation with Brian Daley at the Oxford Patristics Conference in 2007 in which Daley suggested that this rescript against Christian teachers had a greater impact on the Cappadocians than is customarily portrayed. It would have rattled them to their core.

113. As also recorded by Sozomen: "Ἀνέγνων, ἔγνων, κατέγνων," and "Ἀνεγνως, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔγνως· εἰ γὰρ ἔγνως, οὐκ ἂν κατέγνως." Sozomen, *History*, 5.18.7. André-Jean Festugière and Bernard Grillet, *Sozomenè: Histoire Ecclisiastique*, SC 495 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005), 190.

received meaning. Basil is often cast as an enemy of Origenist allegory and the beginning of Antiochene exegesis. This is not entirely accurate. Basil practiced a spiritual exegesis after the same character as Origen, only he emphasized the personal role of the Spirit more than Origen in order to argue for the divinity of the Spirit from the experience of reading Scripture received as the word of God.

Was Basil an enemy of Origen in his hermeneutics? Basil's exegetical predilections have long been defined by his famous statement in the *Hexaemeron* where he decried an overactive allegorization of the Scriptures.[114] In the evening sermon, after five days of morning and evening preaching on the six days of creation, Basil begins with what sounds like a qualification:

> I know the laws of allegory, although I did not invent them myself, but have met them in the works of others. Those who do not admit the common meaning of the Scriptures say that water is not water, but some other nature, and they explain a plant and a fish according to their opinion. They describe also the production of reptiles and wild animals, changing it according to their own notions, just like the dream interpreters, who interpret for their own ends the appearances seen in their dreams. When I hear grass, I think of grass, and in the same manner I understand everything as it is said, a plant, a fish, a wild animal, and an ox. *Indeed, I am not ashamed of the gospel* [Rom. 1:16].[115]

Scholars have often taken this passage of Basil to mean that he rejects the overactive allegorical method of Origen and the Alexandrians.[116] He is taken by some to be an originator of the Antiochene exegetical method, with its stout historical and grammatical footing. William Tieck writes, for example,

114. Peter Martens, "Interpreting Attentively: The Ascetic Character of Biblical Exegesis according to Origen and Basil of Caesarea," in *Origeniana Octava* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 1115; Richard Lim, "The Politics of Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron*" *VC* 44 (1990): 351.

115. *Hex.* 9.1 (GCS: 146.11–147.3; Way: 135–36).

116. "If Gregory of Nyssa represents a brilliant culmination of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition, his older brother Basil of Caesarea is uncompromisingly Antiochene in his approach to the Bible. In *On the Hexaemeron* Basil explicitly rejects the Alexandrian approach to the creation narrative in Genesis as firmly as Theodore did. He alleges that allegorists, out of embarrassment with the actual content of the Bible, treat things mentioned in it like symbols to be decoded from a dream." Joseph W. Trigg, *Biblical Interpretation* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 35.

> Although Origen must be reckoned among the first to venture in the direction of a scholarly approach to Scripture, this was largely offset by his radical resort to allegory, so that the solid exegetical content of his work is relatively small. It was rather the Antiochian school which brought exegesis within the orbit of a scientific grammatical-historical method. And in many ways Basil enjoys the distinction of being a forerunner of this school, a morning star of the exegetical reformation which its work constitutes.[117]

Tieck sees Basil as a friend and colleague of Diodore of Tarsus, with whom he may have shared time as students in Athens.[118] The students of Diodore established the Antiochene exegetical practice: John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret.[119]

In the most common interpretation of the two movements, the Alexandrian school of exegesis is seen as open to free-floating allegory that replaced the meanings of words entirely with fantastical interpretation, while the Antiochene school exercised historical and grammatical restraint in the interpretation of the texts, while nevertheless seeking the *theoria*, or spiritual meaning, of Scripture. The allegory of the Alexandrians is cited as an evacuation of the original meaning of the text, even to the point of dismissing the history of the Jews.[120] In the movement from Origen to Chrysostom, from Alexandria to Antioch, Tieck sees Basil and the Cappadocians as a bridge. Gregory of Nyssa remained faithful to the allegorical method, Basil strove for the historical-grammatical model of *theoria*, and Gregory of Nazianzus occupied the middle ground.[121] Basil's movement toward a plain reading of Scripture is seen then as a move away from Origen:

> It is interesting that while Origen's concept of inspiration led him to such an ethereal treatment of Scripture that its primary meaning was all but dissipated, Basil's method of exegesis was at basis simply a more responsible corollary of the same general theory of inspiration.

117. William Tieck, "Basil of Caesarea and the Bible" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1953), 157.

118. Diodore is mentioned in *Epp.* 99 and 244, and is the addressee of *Epp.* 135 and 160.

119. Tieck, "Bible," 159.

120. For example, John David Dawson points out that allegory as commonly portrayed becomes an accomplice in supersessionism and even anti-Semitism, but he hopes to argue for a "kind of Christian figural reading that can remain true to its vocation of fashioning Christian identity while simultaneously cherishing human diversity." In his view, allegory as actually practiced, can be redeemed in this scheme. Dawson, *Christian*, 7.

121. Tieck, "Bible," 157.

> . . . Instead of allowing him to become lost in excessive allegorical or mystical or figurative exposition, his insight led him to a lexical and grammatical regard for Scripture and to an appreciation of its formal and stylistic side as aids to interpretation.[122]

Tieck is not alone in his evaluation of Origen's allegorical method and the opinion that Origen's overactive allegorization evacuated the Scripture of its historical meaning.[123] R. P. C. Hanson writes, "The most usual resort which Origen uses in order to reconcile inconsistencies in the Bible is to abandon the literal meaning of portions of the passages which cause the difficulty and to represent them as composed partly of literal and partly of purely allegorical meanings."[124] This is what Basil is referring to in his charge against allegory: the dissipation or irresponsible transposition of the meaning of the text that Origen so neatly personifies in some modern analysis.

However, this interpretation of Basil needs to be corrected on a number of points. The first is that Origen did not, in fact, evacuate the original, historical, or simple sense of Scripture. The perspicuous reading is the first step in understanding the text, but clearly it is not the last. Origen teaches a threefold sense of Scripture that includes the historical sense, along with a moral sense and a spiritual sense.[125] In *On First Principles*, Origen teaches that the historical meaning is to be sought, but there are occasions where the plain sense will not be rationally acceptable to the reader:

> Accordingly he who reads in an exact manner must, in obedience to the Savior's precept which says, *search the Scriptures* [John 5:39], carefully investigate how far the literal meaning is true and how far it is impossible, and to the utmost of his power must trace out from the

122. Ibid., 159.

123. See, e.g., Robert Grant and David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 2nd rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 52–72.

124. R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 260. Cf. Eric Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, ed. W. Godzich and J. Schulte-Sasse, trans. R. Manheim (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11–76.

125. *On First Principles* 4.2.4. Karen Jo Torjesen, "Hermeneutics and Soteriology in Origen's *Peri Archon*," StPatr 21 (1989): 343–44. John David Dawson writes, "Origen's allegorical hermeneutic is not as antithetical to history as Auerbach believes. . . . Origen also has an interest in preserving the historical character of biblical figures, but to him, their historical character consists in their act of occurring in the real world and their continuing capacity to affect individuals. Origen is no less concerned than Auerbach with the historical as the real, but for Origen, reality is a quality first of all events that engage the spiritual lives of individuals in the present." Dawson, *Christian*, 115.

> use of similar expressions the meaning scattered everywhere through the Scriptures of that which when taken literally is impossible. When, therefore, as will be clear to those who read, the passage as a connected whole is literally impossible, whereas the outstanding part of it is not impossible but even true, the reader must endeavor to grasp the entire meaning, connecting by an intellectual process the account of what is literally impossible with the parts that are not impossible but are historically true, these being interpreted allegorically in common with the parts which, so far as the letter goes, did not happen at all. For our contention with regard to the whole of divine Scripture is that it all has a spiritual meaning, but not all a bodily meaning; for the bodily meaning is often proved to be an impossibility. Consequently the man who reads the divine books reverently, believing them to be divine writings, must exercise great care [προσοχὴν].[126]

So then it was never the intent of Origen to dissolve or disregard the historical sense, but to allow for a higher stratification of meaning when the historical or literal sense stands as a rational impossibility, as Henri de Lubac writes: "The spiritual interpretation seems in this case like an expedient intended to find in certain passages a meaning that they would otherwise lack."[127]

A number of scholars have rendered a more careful treatment of Origen that sustains the historical and literal interest in his exegetical method,[128] accompanied by a more nuanced understanding of history itself.[129] Mark Edwards points out that an attitude of disregard for the literal or historical meaning simply does not square with the biography of Origen: "Had Origen been as inimical to history as is often supposed, he would not have collated manuscripts and traversed the land of Palestine to determine whether the Baptist performed his ministry at Bethany or Bethabara (*Commentary on John* 6.40–41)."[130] Origen's writing demonstrates concern for historical events and

126. *On First Principles* 4.3.5 (GCS: 330.14–331.17; Butterworth: 296–97). Note that this passage exists in the Greek as a result of its inclusion in the *Philocalia* of Basil and Gregory.

127. Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, trans. Anne Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 112.

128. Eg. Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis*, Patristische Text und Studien (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986).

129. Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 165–69; Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 150.

130. Edwards, *Origen*, 150.

his own exposure to the histories of Josephus.[131] The production of the monumental *Hexapla* by Origen, which arranged the Hebrew, its Greek transliteration, and four Greek translations into six parallel columns, demonstrates in its own right a deep concern for the meaning of the original text and for the type of systematic lexical studies later employed in Antioch. It seems far-fetched to presume that Basil regarded Origen as lackadaisical about the historical or literal sense of the Scripture.

Second, allegory was not limited to the Alexandrian interpretation. Scholarship has increasingly agreed that allegory is inevitable in any Christian interpretation of Scripture that takes the coherence of the Bible from the earliest Hebrew writings to the latest Greek as a point of faith. As Robert Wilken writes, "With the help of allegory Christians learned to read the Bible as a single book about Christ."[132] Allegory is not nearly the watchword of foolishness that it was only a few decades ago. The Christian use of allegory begins within the New Testament itself and,

> as an interpretive technique is a way of interpreting the Old Testament in light of the new things that have taken place with the coming of Christ. . . . The unanimous testimony of the early Church is that the God disclosed in Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit is the God revealed in the Scriptures as a whole.[133]

Allegory is a tool for providing a comprehensive view of the Christian Scriptures. Wilken points out that the basic two-level stratification of meaning is universal in Christian biblical interpretation; there is the literal and the spiritual sense, the *foris* and the *intus*:

> Again and again the church fathers speak of moving from the outer sense, the surface meaning, to a deeper inner understanding of the text. This inner sense is not arcane or esoteric, it is the sense given by the Holy Spirit who bears witness to Christ. It is only through the Spirit that one comes to know Christ and only through Christ that one is able to understand the Scriptures.[134]

131. *Against Celsus* 1.47. See Bernhard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1987), 168–202. Neuschäfer surveys an impressive list of passages demonstrating Origen's continuing concern for the historical, from his attention to the genealogies of Jesus to his effort to calculate exact chronologies out of Matthew 24:15 and Daniel 9:24–27.

132. Wilken, *Spirit*, 72.

133. Robert Louis Wilken, "In Defense of Allegory," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 2 (April 1998): 201, 208.

This basic two-level model is consistent between the so-called Alexandrian and Antiochene schools, despite their differences in emphasis, one of many factors presently causing the traditional Alexandrian/Antiochene distinction to fall out of favor in historical analysis of early church exegesis.[135] Frances Young explains that it was not allegory as such that the Antiochians opposed, but a disregard for the coherence of the Scriptures.[136] Allegory properly applied is the natural result of any attempt to view the Christian Bible as a coherent whole; it is the only recourse for a christological reading of the Old Testament, and it is the natural result of any Christian theology of Holy Scripture that includes the Holy Spirit as the source of inspiration and authority.

Basil was not divorced from the need to find a deeper, alternative meaning in the texts of the Scriptures, and it should not be assumed that Basil's comments at the beginning of *Hexaemeron* 9 were directed at Origen or the Alexandrian habits of biblical exegesis. In *Hexaemeron* 3, he addresses the allegorical reading of the waters and the deep:

> We also have some quarrel concerning the division of the waters with those writers of the Church who, on a pretext of the spiritual sense and of more sublime concepts, have recourse to allegories, saying that spiritual and incorporeal powers are signified figuratively by the waters, that the more excellent have remained up above in the firmament, but the malignant remain below in the terrestrial and material regions. For this reason, they say, the waters above the heavens praise God; that is, the good powers, being worthy because of the purity of their reasoning, pay to the Creator becoming praise. But, the waters under the heavens are the spirits of malice, which have fallen down from their natural height to the depth of wickedness. Inasmuch as these are tumultuous and factious and

134. Wilken, "Allegory," 208; cf. Robert Louis Wilken, "How to Read the Bible," *First Things* 181 (March 2008): 24–27. Henri de Lubac writes, "In the end, the essential division will thus be neither threefold or fourfold. There are in Scripture, fundamentally, only two senses: the literal and the spiritual, and these two senses themselves are in continuity, not in opposition. The spirit is in the letter like honey in its honeycomb." De Lubac, *History*, 205.

135. McGuckin, "Patterns," 37.

136. "So neither literalism as such, nor an interest in historicity as such, stimulated the Antiochene reaction against Origenist allegory, but rather a different approach to finding meaning in literature which had its background in the educational system of the Graeco-Roman world. Perhaps we could say that it was not 'allegory' as such that they objected to; for allegory was a standard figure of speech, and, if the text carried some indication of its presence, even allegory could be allowed. What they resisted was the type of allegory that destroyed textual coherence." Young, *Exegesis*, 176.

> agitated by the uproar of the passions, they are named 'sea' [θάλασσαν] from the instability and inconstancy of their voluntary movements.[137] Dismissing such explanations as dream interpretations and old women's tales, let us consider water as water, and let us receive the separation that was made beneath the firmament according to the reason given us.[138]

Basil reproaches those who grant consciousness to elements mentioned in the creation account of Genesis, those who personify water and claim that the separation of the waters is attributed to bad moral behavior of the lower waters. Is Basil attacking Origen then? While Origen did allow for the rationality of heavenly beings,[139] Richard Lim points out that he did so only in a spirit of biblical coherence; "Thus Basil can hardly have accused Origen of 'wild speculation,' for what Origen does is to draw intertextually on other parts of Scriptures to throw light on the particular line in Genesis [Gen. 1:6]."[140] Basil includes in this polemic an accusation against those who locate the etymology of the word "sea" in the inconstancy and incessant movement of the evil spirits. This claim is not found in Origen, which suggests that whoever Basil is targeting, it is not Origen. While his criticism may include many facets of excessive Origenist allegory, it seems that his opponents are other than Origen and his followers.

In another similar passage, Basil decries those who have allegorized the words darkness (σκότος) and abyss (ἀβύσσου) to the point of personifying these terms into spiritual powers: "What fierce wolves, beginning with these insignificant words, have preyed upon souls, scattering God's flock! Have not the Marcionites? And have not the Valentinians come from the same source? Has not the abominable heresy of the Manichaeans?"[141] In his classification of these heresies as being united at the source and in his reference to heretics as wolves, there are clear echoes of Irenaeus of Lyons.[142] The constellation of words that Basil attends in arguing for a more literal translation are all words very closely aligned with gnostic thought. Words like *deep*, *darkness*, *abyss*, *sea*,

137. The etymological argument might refer to the use of the verb θάλλω to describe the erratic behavior of an overactive child.

138. *Hex.* 3.9 (GCS: 53.21–54.11; Way: 51–52).

139. Eg. Origen, *Homily on Genesis* 1.2.

140. Lim, "Politics," 356. "And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.'" Genesis 1:6.

141. *Hex.* 2.4 (GCS: 27.5–9; Way: 26–27).

142. *Against Heresies* 1.pref.2, 2.14, 3.2, and 4.6.

waters, and so on , enjoyed magnificent speculative allegorization in the limitless imagination of the gnostic "protest exegesis" of Genesis.[143] Origen had himself opposed "the schools of Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides"[144] for their "carnal" reading of Scripture and inconsistent use of allegory. His own form of allegory served to defend the usefulness and fittingness of the Old Testament against the challenges of the Marcionites, whose churches were strong in Syria when Origen was active in Caesarea of Palestine.[145] Those who attempt to replace the original meaning with a speculative meaning, in Basil's view, "believe that the words of the Spirit are of less value than their foolish wisdom." They

> have attempted by false arguments and allegorical interpretations to bestow on the Scripture a dignity of their own imagining. But theirs is the attitude of one who considers himself wiser [σοφώτερον] than the revelations of the Spirit and introduces his own ideas in pretense of an explanation. Therefore, let it be understood as it has been written.[146]

While there is no doubt that Basil was willing to correct Origen, there is also little doubt that he regarded Origen as the great master of the previous generations and held him in high regard.[147] Theories that propose that Basil rejected Origen's method of allegory or suggest that he represents the beginnings of the anti-Origenist sentiments of the Antiochene school crash up against the hard fact of history that Basil saw fit, along with Gregory of Nazianzus, to compose and distribute a compendium of the exegetical teachings of Origen, delivering this methodology to posterity in the *Philocalia*.[148] It seems more likely that Basil had the fantastical cosmological interpretations of

143. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. Robert Wilson (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987), 54.

144. *On First Principles* 2.9.5 (GCS: 168.15; Butterworth: 133). See de Lubac, *History*, 54n16, for a list of around twenty references in Origen where these three are listed, sometimes with others, as a common group of opponents to the gospel.

145. De Lubac, *History*, 57.

146. *Hex.* 9.1 (GCS: 147.19–22; Way: 136).

147. Basil's only direct reference to Origen is when he lists Origen among the past fathers who used the phrase "with the Holy Spirit" in the doxology: "His notions concerning the Spirit are not always sound, but in many passages he recognizes the force of long-established usage, and his words are consonant with true religion." *Spir.* 29.73.1–4 (SC 17:506; Anderson: 109). See also Jean Gribomont, "L'Origénisme de saint Basile," in *Saint Basile: Évangile et église,* Spiritualité Orientale et Vie Monastique 36–37, vol. 1 (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Bellefontaine, 1984): 229–42.

148. Gribomont, "Origénisme," 240; Lim, "Politics," 351, 365n3; Martens, "Ascetic," 1115.

the gnostics in mind when he wrote against overactive allegory, rather than Origen.[149]

When Basil's exegetical tendencies are matched up with Origen's spiritual hermeneutic, the enduring differences are no more than a family quarrel. Basil is not an enemy of Origen when it comes to reading the Bible; in fact, Basil appears to have taken up Origen's habits of reading Scripture more than any other. This is particularly clear when the ascetical character of Basil's hermeneutic is examined. In a short, but penetrating article, Peter Martens explores the shared ascetic character of biblical exegesis in Origen and Basil. Martens centers his argument on the consistent use of the word *attention* (προσοχή) and its attendant verb (προσέχω) to describe the activity of reading Scripture properly in both Origen and Basil.[150] The discipline of attentiveness lies at the very root of Christian asceticism. In the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius describes the beginning of Antony's monastic life as the moment when Antony "began to pay attention to himself."[151]

Basil deeply valued this characteristic of the monastic life, as is evident in his sermon on Deuteronomy 15:9, *Homily on the Words: "Be Attentive to Yourself."*[152] In this sermon, Basil uses the term *prosochē* to describe the necessity for the Christian to guard the mind against all intrusions of evil thought; sins can be committed easily in the unseen privacy of one's own thought world, and they are no less damaging for going unnoticed. But this somewhat philosophical and even Stoic principle of self-attentiveness is also applied to attentiveness to Scripture in both Origen and Basil, and "there are three very important passages—all of which are preserved in the *Philocalia*—in which Origen tells us that the ideal reader of Scripture reads attentively for the purpose of discovering its deeper spiritual meaning."[153] In *On First Principles*, Origen

149. Basil is certainly still aware of the continuing need in his time to oppose strands of Gnosticism: "Tesisting the attacks of a so-called system of knowledge [τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως]." *Concerning Faith* (PG 31, 680C; Wagner: 60). Basil's contemporary, Epiphanius of Salamis, whom Basil aided in his research (*Ep.* 258), obviously still considered opposition to Gnosticism a necessary pursuit. The fact that Basil refers to these opponents as "certain writers of the Church" should not eliminate the possibility that Gnosticism is the target. The enduring problem with gnostic groups was that they refused to differentiate themselves from the church.

150. Pierre Hadot outlines the importance of paying attention, and this particular term *prosochē*, in chapter 4 of *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 126–44. The principle was central to Stoicism, and Epictetus included a chapter on attentiveness, Περὶ προσοχῆς, in his writings. *Discourses* 4.12.7.

151. Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 3 (PG 26, 844B).

152. PG 31, 197–217.

153. Martens, «Ascetic,» 1120.

writes that it is those who approach the writings of Moses "with care and attention"[154] who will be able to understand their true meaning, and again that the virtuous reader must exercise "great attention."[155]

The quality of reading with attentiveness was apparently a particular virtue of Gregory Thaumaturgus, as Origen's letter to him reveals.

> Devote yourself [πρόσεχε] principally to the reading of divine Scripture—do devote yourself [πρόσεχε]. For we who read the divine texts are in need of great attentiveness [πολλῆς . . . προσοχῆς], lest we say or think something too rashly about them. Devoting yourself [προσέχων] to the reading of the divine books with a faithful disposition pleasing to God, knock at its closed door and it will be opened to you. . . . And as you apply yourself [προσέχων] to this divine reading seek correctly with an unshaken faith in God the meaning of the divine writings hidden from the many. Do not be content with knocking and seeking, because prayer is most necessary in understanding the divine books.[156]

Martens points out the remarkable piling up of the term *prosochē* in Origen's instructions to Gregory Thaumaturgus on reading the Scriptures.[157] Basil likewise applies this philosophical virtue to the reading of Scripture, writing in his *Ethics* that the Christian is to hear the words of the Lord "with attentiveness"[158] and charging his listeners to free themselves from the distraction of the flesh so that they can pay attention to the words of God in his *Homily on Psalm 45*.[159] In a letter, Basil commends a colleague on the basis of 1 Timothy 4:13, writing "for it is clear that you are attentive in your reading [of Scripture]."[160] In the *Hexaemeron* itself, where, as we have seen, Basil is often regarded as making a direct attack on Origen's hermeneutic sensibilities, Basil exhorts his listeners to become worthy readers of the Scripture, as Martens summarizes *Hexaemeron* 1.1:

154. "Μετ' ἐπιμελείας καὶ προσοχῆς." *On First Principles* 4.1.6 (GCS: 302.3–4).

155. "Πολλὴν προσοχήν." Ibid., 4.3.5 (GCS: 331.15).

156. *Philocalia* 13.4 (Martens: 1120)

157. Martens, "Ascetic," 1120. We need not rehearse the importance of Gregory Thaumaturgus in the Cappadocian Christian life.

158. "Μετὰ προσοχῆς." *Ethics* 9 (PG 31, 716).

159. PG 29, 428; Way: 307.

160. *Ep.* 260.2.6 (Courtonne 3:106; LCL: 50). 1 Timothy 4:13: "Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching;" "πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ."

> This reader should be "worthy [ἀξία]" to hear the account of God's creation of heaven and earth, have a "soul prepared [παρεσκευασμένην ψυχήν]" to learn the lessons of Genesis, be "purified from the passions of the flesh [καθαρεύουσαν τῶν παθῶν τῆς σαρκός]," be "not darkened by worldly cares [ἀνεπισκότητον μερίμναις βιωτικαῖς]," and be "loving of labor [φιλόπονον]." If such a reader cannot attain to the depths of the author's thoughts because of the weakness of his thought then at least, Basil continues, this reader can be led on to agreement with the text if he "pays attention to what is written with a worthy faith [ἀξιοπιστίᾳ προσέχοντες τοῦ λέγοντος]."... An attentive reading is a virtuous reading.[161]

In this emphasis on the attentive reading, Martens finds the grounds to conclude that Basil's exegesis is not only continuously consistent with Origen's hermeneutic but also is directly dependent upon it. For both Basil and Origen, the important thing is to apply a rigorous, spiritual attentiveness to the Scriptures. In so doing the reader may have the hope of being led into the divine meaning. What Martens neglects is the role of the Spirit. If the exegetical technique of Basil is tied so closely to his ascetical interests, as I believe it is, then the whole enterprise of reading Scripture for Basil is one of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The first thing to say about Basil's exegesis, then, is that he models his reading of Scripture after the Alexandrian, Origen, and is not in fact opposed to the use of allegory.

The second point to make in characterizing Basil as an exegete is that he is aware of a crisis of interpretation inherent in allegory. The departure from the plain sense of the text could subject one to fantastical interpretations that are divorced from the words on the page so severely as to render them meaningless. Basil is aware that the reader is stepping into a breach when he leaves the words on the page and searches for the spiritual meaning hovering over them, but he is confident that he does not enter the breach alone. Interpretation is not a free science. The original meaning cannot be dissipated for the spiritual meaning. There must be a transcending principle that orders the spiritual reading. Basil begins to grow confident in saying that this transcending principle is the personal activity of the Holy Spirit.

It appears that there are two distinct views of Scripture in Basil's writings. When Basil wrote to his former instructor Libanius, he admitted that the Christian Scriptures were coarse and unpolished things. In *Epistle* 339, Basil admits with some rhetorical flare that he now keeps company with Moses and

161. Martens, "Ascetic," 1119.

Elijah and other "such blessed men, who communicate their own thoughts to us in a barbarian voice, and from such as these we now take our form of speech, one that is true indeed, though unlearned in style, as these very words demonstrate."[162] Basil appears to have little regard for the form and style of the Scriptures, but when it comes to his revered and lofty prologue to the psalms, which will be further explored below, there is no limit to the praise he is willing to heap on the language of the psalms even in their form and balance and structure. What accounts for this change? The difference is in the activity of the Spirit. When Basil wrote to Libanius, he wrote as a man of classical rhetoric to a man who reads the Scriptures without the aid of the Holy Spirit. To Libanius, the Scriptures are dead letters. But when Basil addressed the worshiping body, the Scriptures come alive by virtue of the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Inspirer of the words is present to provide their reception in the mind and heart. In the divine light of the Spirit, the words come alive.

Basil believes that the Scripture is understood only when the Spirit provides the understanding in the illumined mind of the reader. Michael Haykin writes concerning Basil's view,

> The exegete who wishes to provide a faithful interpretation of the Scriptures must not only have a vital communion with the Holy Spirit, under whose inspiration the Scriptures were written, but also have the gift of discernment [τὸ κάρισμα τῆς διακρίσεως].[163]

Basil writes in one letter that the capacity for discernment of the Scriptures is like the sense of taste or the sense of sight. If these faculties are hindered, then they lose balance and falter, so that honey seems bitter or the eye sees things that do not exist. So it is, he writes, for the study of literature and for the judgment of right teaching. Only those studied in these matters have the authority to offer judgments in the same way only a farmer can judge agriculture or a musician music: "And I see that in the words of the Spirit, not everyone has had the ability to devote himself to the careful examination of the passages, but the one who possesses the Spirit of discernment."[164] So then, Basil concludes, if the question is a spiritual one it must be discerned by someone who has the gift of spiritual discernment. Basil regards an accurate understanding of the meaning of Scripture as a gift bestowed by the Spirit of God.[165]

162. "Νοῦν μὲν ἀληθῆ, λέξιν δὲ ἀμαθῆ." *Ep.* 339.22–23 (Courtonne 3:207).

163. Michael Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 119n103.

164. *Ep.* 204.5.23–25 (Courtonne 2:177).

The illumination of the mind is necessary for the exegesis of Scripture, in Basil, and this illumination comes from the Spirit. Nowhere is this clearer than in Basil's exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:16–18 in *On the Holy Spirit*. Here Basil is engaged in his own defense of the coherence, the singular voice, of the Old and New Testaments. The prophets foretold the coming of Christ and the law was a foreshadowing of the fulfillment of righteousness demonstrated by him, but now "the types have been exchanged for the truth. Lamps are not needed after sunrise, and since the truth has appeared, the job of the law is over, and the prophets become silent."[166] Those who continue to read the Old Testament without the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ are reading it with a veil over their eyes, as Paul pronounces. Basil perceives that his opponents, who designate the Spirit as a ministering spirit only, read Scripture under the same veil. This is an important passage for Basil because Paul explicitly equates the Spirit with the word "Lord." Basil writes,

> But to leave no room for further doubt, I will quote the Apostle's words in greater detail: *To this day, when they read the Old Testament, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away . . . when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit* [2 Cor. 3:14, 16–17].[167]

It is when the reader turns toward the Lord Spirit that the veil is removed. Turning toward the Spirit means welcoming the activity of the Spirit and allowing the Spirit to govern the exegesis of Scripture, enlightening the mind to receive the word of the Lord. Those who read absent the Spirit read with the veil over their eyes, mind, and heart. Basil writes:

> One given the ability to perceive the depth of the law's meaning, who passes through the curtain of literal obscurity and arrives at unutterable truths, is like Moses, who removed his veil when he spoke with God. Such a man has turned from the letter to the Spirit. . . . He who throws away the letter and turns to the Lord when reading the law (and here the Lord refers to the Spirit) becomes like Moses, whose face shone with the glory of God's manifestation.

165. McGuckin, "Patterns," 47.

166. *Spir.* 21.52.47–50 (SC 17:434–36; Anderson: 82).

167. Ibid., 21.52.36–41 (SC 17:434; Anderson: 82). It should not be missed that the Spirit is called "the Lord" in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Arguments such as the one under discussion were doubtless the justification of this clause.

> Objects placed near something brilliantly colored themselves become tinted through reflected light; likewise he who fixes his gaze on the Spirit is transfigured to greater brightness, his heart illumined by the light of the Spirit's truth. Then the glory of the Spirit is changed into such a person's own glory, not stingily, or dimly, but with the abundance we would expect to find within someone who had been enlightened by the Spirit.[168]

Basil emphasizes that it is the Spirit who removes the veil of Moses that still clouds the reading of Scripture for those who are not illumined. The Spirit illuminates the mind for the understanding of Scripture. Without the activity of the Spirit, the words would lie as dead on the page as the "letter that kills" referred to by Paul.

Origen had also approached this same text in discussion of exegesis. In *Against Celsus*, he argues that the veil remains over those who take only the literal meaning of the text as the true meaning. But, he writes,

> we know that *if anyone shall turn to the Lord (now the Lord is the Spirit), the veil is taken away* and *with unveiled face he reflects* as it were *the glory of the Lord* that is in the thoughts hidden in the text, and transmutes the so-called divine glory into his own glory. The word *face* is used figuratively [τροπικῶς], and more simply, as one might say, means the mind; in this is the face *according to the inner man* [Rom. 7:22] that is filled with light and glory when the true meaning of the law is understood.[169]

For Origen, to have the veil removed means to come to knowledge of the true spiritual meaning of the text. For Basil it is slightly different. Where for Origen the Spirit gives the reader divine light and then the reader is capable thereafter of understanding the true meaning, for Basil the lifting of the veil is the very presence of the Spirit of God:

> For Origen the removal of the veil, which he usually understands to be a designation of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, opens up the way for the believer's contemplation of the spiritual truths which lie hidden beneath the Scriptural text. But for Basil, the lifting

168. Ibid., 21.52.51–71 (SC 17:436).

169. *Against Celsus* 5.60 (PG 11, 1276CD). Cf. *On First Principles* 1.1.2 and 4.1.6.

> of the veil means that the believer is brought face to face with the Lord himself, that is, the Spirit.[170]

In Basil, the lifting of the veil is the actual illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit.[171]

Since Basil owes so much of his exegetical practice to Origen, it is important to recognize this point of differentiation. It may seem a subtle point, but it is nonetheless a critical distinction. Basil is less theologically positivist than Origen.[172] In Origen, the capacity to know God is transferred to the knower by way of the aid of God. In Basil, and in his Cappadocian colleagues who follow his lead on this point perhaps more than any other, the knower remains dependent upon the presence and continuing action of the Revealer for knowledge of God. The Christian is suspended before revelation, not given the capacity to climb the clouded mountain of divine knowledge. Basil describes God as "incomprehensible to human reason and inexpressible by the human voice."[173] Basil was pressed toward this doctrine in reaction to Eunomius's overreaching claims of theological positivism, himself convinced that there is no knowledge of God without God's own, active, self-revelation.

His colleague and his younger brother would both work to restore the motivations for theology, pulling them back from the brink of the total *apophasis* that Basil often seems to entertain, but they retain his sense of divine dependence. Gregory of Nazianzus writes, "[The light], which bestows on the things that see and that are seen both the power of seeing and the power of being seen, is itself the most beautiful of visible things. So it is also with the God who created both the power of thinking and the power of being thought

170. Haykin, *Spirit*, 156.

171. Hermann Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1956), 67.

172. Even though one could hardly call Origen a theological positivist, Basil is still even less so. Origen's most critical passage on the capacity for knowledge of God is in *Against Celsus*: "Plato may say that it is difficult to find the maker and father of this universe, indicating that it is not impossible for human nature to find God in a degree worthy of him. . . . But we affirm that human nature is not sufficient in any way to seek for God and to find him in his pure nature, unless it is helped by the God who is object of the search. And he is found by those who, after doing what they can, admit that they need him, and shows himself to those to whom he judges it right to appear, so far as it is possible for God to be known to man and for the human soul which is still in the body to know God." *Against Celsus* 7.42 (Chadwick: 430–31).

173. *Hex.* 2.2 (GCS: 25.6–7). Cf. Jarosalv Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 200; Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91.

of."[174] God provides both the being known and the knowing, precluding the theological positivism of Eunomius, but nevertheless offering the promise of knowledge of God.[175] Gregory of Nyssa strikes a similar chord. Jaroslav Pelikan describes how too much emphasis on the unknowability of God "could impose a chill" on the entire mystical religious enterprise of knowing God:

> Therefore [Gregory] urged on his audience the necessity of striving for it with all the greater effort. Such striving did achieve a genuine increase in knowledge about God, but that knowledge consisted of an ever-growing recognition of the transcendence of the divine nature over any contemplation of it. Initially, it was ignorance that had to admit that it did not know; but eventually it was knowledge, as enlightened by divine revelation, that had to declare: "That which is uncreated and which precedes all the *aeons* and which is eternal remains incomprehensible" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Canticle* 13).[176]

Basil is so insistent on the incomprehensibility of God that he lays himself open to Eunomius's charge that he worships what he does not know. The Gregories would answer the charge, but would never abandon Basil's position of utter dependence on God. At the present, this serves to illustrate the differentiation between Origen and Basil in spiritual exegesis. For Origen, the veil is breached, but for Basil and for his colleagues God remains behind the veil, revealing only what he will.

In some ways, Basil's exegesis is subjectivist. The Spirit contends with the reader directly, illuminating the appropriate meaning of the text for the individual's instruction in virtue. The same text may have a number of meanings, a number of applications, as the Spirit uses the text to instruct the reader just as the same animals in creation may teach different lessons of virtue as the Spirit uses them to instruct. The inspiration of the Scriptures is only the beginning point of the work of the Spirit, just as the moment of creation is a beginning. Without the Spirit, the letter remains dead.

Basil was not opposed to allegory, as his comments in the *Hexaemeron* suggest. He was much nearer to Origen in his hermeneutics than any other figure. Like Origen, Basil looked to a second strata of meaning, a spiritual level of meaning, that absorbed the plain sense without departing from it—a process described by Dawson as consuming the body of the text, or "reading

174. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 21.1 (PG 35, 1084AB).

175. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 90–110.

176. Pelikan, *Christianity*, 202.

with fire."[177] Origen compared the Holy Spirit to fire that roasts the Passover lamb and turns raw meat into a nutritious meal—a metaphor he then extends by comparing the Scriptures to meat that must be roasted by fire.[178] Basil teaches the same sort of spiritual exegesis, dependent upon the personal activity of the Spirit. He sees the Spirit involved in both the inception and reception of Scripture. Exegesis, like all theology in Basil, is a sort of divine bounce; revelation descends from God and then reascends toward God in human praise modeled after Jesus and enlivened by the Holy Spirit. It is a process that T. F. Torrance calls "logic and analogic" and that Gregory of Nazianzus calls the power of thinking and being thought of. [179] God is on both sides of the process, and so never loses control of the process of revelation.

A few statements can be made in summarizing Basil's exegetical character. He is by no means an enemy of Origen, but considers allegory a necessary tool for overcoming the crisis of interpretation met in the coalescence of the Old and New Testaments. Basil teaches that all Scriptures, including the New Testament, must be read with at least a twofold stratification of meaning. Finally, Basil is serious about the actual presence and activity of the Holy Spirit accompanying a Christian reading of the Bible, and believes it is the only possible solution to the breach opened up between the text on the page and its meaning in the heart of the reader. What remains is to see this hermeneutic applied in Basil's own practice.

Examples of Basil's Spiritual Exegesis

As an exegete, Basil demonstrates preference for the literal meaning and is repeatedly critical of those who prefer their own imaginations over what is represented in the text, without entirely rejecting the need for allegory. He

177. Dawson, *Christian*, 72–73.

178. "Therefore the Holy Spirit is rightly called *fire*, which it is necessary for us to receive in order to have converse with the *flesh* of Christ, I mean the divine Scriptures, so that, when we have roasted them with this divine *fire*, we may eat them roasted with fire. For the words are changed by such fire, and we will see that they are sweet and nourishing." Origen, *On the Passover* 27.1–5 (Daly: 41–42; Guéraud/Nautin: 60–61).

179. "Theological activity is one in which, by the power and communion of the Spirit, we know God through conformity to the economic condescension of his Word and through following the Incarnation of the Word in his advance up to the Father. In this way theology not only operates with a divinely given truth, but apprehends it in accordance with its own mode of activity in condescension and ascension, and articulates it in accordance with its own interior and dynamic logic, the movement from grace to glory." T. F. Torrance, "The Logic and Analogic of Biblical and Theological Statements in the Greek Fathers," in *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 389; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 21.1 (PG 35, 1084B).

often suggests that the meaning can be best understood by situating the verse in its context or by finding parallel or similar verses in other parts of the Bible. The principle of coherence in the inspiration of the entirety of Christian Scripture by the same Spirit allowed Basil to proclaim that Scripture interprets Scripture; that is, if there is a lack of clarity in any given verse, the reader should first look to other verses where the same words are used and assume a consistency of meaning.[180]

Basil's hermeneutic is also practical. He is convinced that the words of Scripture were written for the welfare of the human being and that the Spirit intends to use them to guide the contemporary church into virtue. The Spirit must be sought, honored, and heeded, because the Spirit governs the reception of the words in their true meaning. The Spirit reveals what is behind the veil by being an ever-present illumination. The Spirit informs the reader with the christological reading of Old Testament texts. Because Basil prefers the literal sense, and believes that the advent of the day of Christ has brought such light as to render lamps of the law and prophets superfluous, his most interesting interpretive moves come in his engagement with Old Testament texts as he finds the Christ-enlightened rendering. Because the Spirit uses these words to direct the community, or the individual Christian, the practical application is never far from Basil's interpretation.

The most notable example of Basil's reading of Scripture is his series on Genesis 1, the *Hexaemeron*. In this work, Basil clearly lays out the importance of the generation and the reception of Holy Scripture as a process of the Holy Spirit. Without the outside intervention of God, the human being could never fully understand the nature of the universe. Naturalists and scientists simply swim around in the waters of the cosmos trying to explain this or that particular thing, but can never extract themselves from the pool and look at it from above. For this reason, their theories are in constant motion and continuously refute one another.[181] Different in kind is the revelation delivered by the Holy Spirit to Moses, who was counted worthy by God to receive surpassing knowledge and to speak to God face-to-face, without riddles.[182] "Let us hear, therefore," Basil writes, "the words of truth expressed not in the *persuasive language of human wisdom* [1 Cor. 2:4], but in the *teachings of the Spirit* [1 Cor. 2:13], whose end is not praise from those hearing, but the salvation of those taught."[183]

180. "It is customary for the Lord to elucidate what is definitely laid down in one place by his utterances elsewhere." *Concerning Baptism* 1.1 (PG 31:1516A; Wagner, 340).

181. *Hex.* 1.2.

182. Ibid., 1.1. Cf. Numbers 12:6–8.

183. Ibid. (GCS: 3.10–13; Way: 4–5).

The Spirit is cast as a rhetorician. The Spirit provides words of truth, good teachings, but the Spirit does not use language simply to produce persuasion or to curry superficial praise or the applause of the audience; the Spirit employs language for the salvation of those who will be instructed. This is Basil's view of the inspiration of Scripture. It has come from outside the realm of human knowledge, and so offers a different perspective. To study the universe without recourse to revelation is like running experiments in a lab with no control, only variables; or trying to study one's own language without the knowledge that any other language exists. Without the radical intervention of God the study of the universe is useless, and that radical intervention came in the form of the Spirit's inspiration of Moses and his writings.

William Tieck writes, "It is only by a conscious effort that the modern student can fully appreciate the seriousness with which Basil takes the Mosaic cosmogony. Indeed, the whole of Scripture is accepted unquestioningly and at face value. The inspired record is patent truth itself."[184] But, as we have noted in various places above, this patent truth cannot be received by human minds without the second radical intervention of God the Spirit, the preparation of the mind by divine illumination. In the evening sermon of the first day, Basil expounded upon the depth of meaning in the Genesis passage before them, and the harrowing challenge of plumbing their fathoms. Then, he says:

> Who can look into its secrets? Indeed, even a glimpse of them is unattainable, and to explain what the mind conceives of them is exceedingly difficult. Since, however, rewards by no means contemptible are assigned by the just Judge even for merely undertaking needful tasks, let us not hesitate to investigate. In fact, even if we err in our opinion, nevertheless, if by the assistance of the Spirit we do not depart from the meaning of Scripture, we ourselves shall not be judged entirely deserving of rejection, and with the help of grace we shall furnish some edification to the Church of God.[185]

Scripture could be received and understood only with the help of grace and by the assistance of the Spirit.

For Basil, the mind engaged in contemplation of the knowledge of God had to be first reformed, or sanctified, in order that it may properly process the information it is receiving:

184. Tieck, "Bible," 166.

185. *Hex.* 2.1 (GCS: 21.1–14; Way: 21).

> Since we are proposing to examine the structure of the world and to contemplate the whole universe, beginning, not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant [Moses] when He spoke to him *in person* and *without riddles* [Num. 12:8], it is absolutely necessary that those who are fond of great shows and wonders should have a mind trained for the consideration of what we propose.[186]

There is a need for alteration in the habits of the mind. His listeners were accustomed to entertaining input, but that is no way to approach the mysteries of Scripture. This knowledge will not come in the same way as entertainment at a play or a game. The mind itself needs reshaping by the Spirit.

This hermeneutic is applied to the difficult verse, Genesis 1:6: *Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters to divide the waters*."[187] First Basil is met by the mystery that God seems to be addressing someone, but there has been no indication yet in the account of any other person present but God. Basil follows Origen in the conviction that the inscrutable passages of Scripture are intentionally provided by God to produce a yearning and thirst for greater knowledge of divine things.[188] The account of God commanding when there is no one to receive the command is an intentional mystery in Scripture meant to subtly disclose the existence of the Son, so that "by these means Scripture leads us on to the idea of the Only-Begotten in a certain orderly way. . . . Therefore, this way of speaking has been wisely and skillfully employed so as to rouse our mind to an inquiry of the Person to whom these words are directed."[189]

Next Basil moves to the statement, *Let there be a firmament*. His first recourse is to the literal meaning. Since Genesis 1:1 already stated that the heavens had been created, Basil concludes in literalist fashion that the firmament, which will be called the sky in verse 8, must be a second heaven.[190] He supports this determination with references to 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul declares that he knows a man who was caught up into various levels of heavens, and Psalm 148:4 (LXX), *Praise him, you highest heavens*. When he approaches the nature of the firmament described, again Basil turns to parallel passages of Scripture.

186. Ibid., 6.1 (GCS: 87.13–88.2; Way: 83).

187. The exegesis of this verse is found in ibid., 3.2–9.

188. Ibid., 3.2. Cf. Origen, *On First Principles* 4.2.9.

189. *Hex.* 3.2 (GCS: 40.18–19; Way: 39).

190. Ibid., 3.3.

> It is customary in the Scripture to assign the name of firmament to those things which excel in strength, as when it says: *The Lord is my firmament* [στερέωμά] *and my refuge* [Ps. 18:2] and *I have established* [ἐστερέωσα] *the pillars thereof* [Ps. 74.4, LXX], and *Praise him in the firmament* [στερέωματι] *of his power* [Ps. 150:1]. The heathens call a body solid which is firm and full, and it is so called in distinction from the mathematical body. The mathematical body is the one which has its existence only in dimensions, in width, I mean, and depth and height; and the solid body is one which possesses resistance in addition to its dimensions. It is customary for the Scripture to call the strong and un-yielding substance a firmament, so that it frequently uses this word in the case of air that is condensed, as when it says, *He who strengthens* [στερεῶν] *the thunder* [Amos 4:13, LXX].[191]

The scriptural usage is to be preferred over the meanings found in external works. Basil demonstrates here the principle of preferring scriptural parallels and letting Scripture interpret Scripture. As he continues in his exposition, he includes a number of material possibilities for what might exist in the second heaven that keeps the waters separated above and below. It might be a kind of lightweight glass, or mica; it may be another sort of translucent stone or crystalline rock, but in the end we do not know and we must resist the temptation to speculate.

Next Basil engages the particular allegorists (probably from a gnostic school, as argued above) who have taken the waters, the deep, and other such terms as personifications of spiritual powers. The Scriptures can be taken at face value, he says, and are of greater virtue for that fact. Basil writes,

> let no one compare the simplicity and uncontrived nature of spiritual discourse with the futile questioning of philosophers about the heavens. For, as the beauty in chaste women is far preferable to that of the prostitute, so does the excellence of our discourses surpass outside writings. They introduce in their explanations a forced persuasiveness; here the truth is brought forth denuded of artful devices.[192]

191. Ibid., 3.4 (GCS: 43.26–44.11; Way: 42–43).

192. Ibid., 3.8 (GCS: 53.5–10). Basil apparently has Proverbs 7–9 in mind.

The simplicity of the truth is nobler than the extravagant decorations of falsehood, and so are the simple Scriptures of more value than the artful ruminations of philosophers.

On this basis, Basil brings the allegories of water back toward the literalist reading, again supported by references to other Scripture verses. Water need not be personified.

> Even if the waters above the heavens are sometimes invited to praise the common Master of the universe, yet we do not for this reason consider them to be an intellectual nature. The heavens are not endowed with life because they *show forth the glory of God*, nor is the firmament a perceptive being because it *declares the work of his hands* [Ps. 19:1]. And if someone says that the heavens are speculative powers, and the firmament, active powers productive of the good, we accept the expression as neatly said, but we will not concede that it is altogether true. For, in that case, dew, hoarfrost, cold, and heat, since they were ordered by Daniel [cf. Dan 3:64–70, LXX] to praise in hymns the Creator of the universe, will be intelligent and invisible natures.[193]

Basil applies these intertextual references to the present verse with the conclusion that the elements of creation may be said to sing the praise of the Creator, but only in the sense that all creation demonstrates the glory of the Creator in a general chorus. The suggestion that created things like water or frost have rational intelligence is beyond the pale. Basil demonstrates a preference for the literal meaning combined with a principle of intertextual biblical exegesis.

Ultimately, the Scripture is there in Basil's mind to deliver information about the nature of the universe and the relationship of the human being to the Creator. Basil writes at the close of the sermon,

> May God, who created such mighty things and ordained that these petty words be spoken, grant to you an understanding of his truth in its entirety, in order that from visible objects you may comprehend the invisible being, and from the greatness and beauty of creatures you may conceive the proper idea concerning our Creator, *For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen—his everlasting power also and divinity* [Rom. 1:20]. Therefore, in the earth,

193. Ibid., 3.9 (GCS: 54.12–21; Way: 52).

> in the air, and in the heavens, in water, in night, and in day, and in all things visible, clear reminders of the benefactor grip us.[194]

The meaning of the Scripture is ultimately founded upon the purpose of the Scripture, namely the spiritual edification of the reader in the church.[195] It is in the application of the Scripture that Basil finds its ultimate authority. The Spirit offers this verse (Genesis 1:6) for the sanctification of the believer, that the heart and mind of the believer might be more properly set upon the reality of living as a creature of a good and powerful Creator.

Basil is not averse to allegorizing the Old Testament texts to find their true meaning as illumined by the Spirit in the light of the advent of Christ. In his *Homily on Psalm 28 (LXX)*, for example, Basil employs rich allegory. In an example of Basil's fidelity with every jot and tittle, he begins the sermon with a discussion of the subtitle of the psalm, *At the finishing of the tabernacle*. His first recourse is to address the actual historical context in which this psalm resides, that is, the priestly cult of the Levites and the order given to construct a tabernacle for worship.[196] Basil quickly moves to an allegorical interpretation buttressed by Paul:

> But, according to our mind which contemplates the sublime and makes the law familiar to us through a meaning which is noble and fitted to the divine Scripture, this occurs to us: the ram does not mean the male among the sheep; nor the tabernacle the building constructed from this inanimate material; and the going out from the tabernacle does not mean the departure from the temple; but, the tabernacle for us is this body, as the Apostle taught us: *We who are in this tabernacle sigh* [2 Cor. 5:4].[197]

194. Ibid., 3.10 (GCS: 56.8–16; Way: 54).

195. It is an emphasis on transformation as interpretation that Basil inherits from earlier monastic habits of reading: "Interpretation for the desert fathers always involved the possibility of personal and communal transformation. Holiness in the desert was defined, finally, by how deeply a person allowed himself or herself to be transformed by the words of Scripture." Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 23.

196. *Hom. on Psalm 28 (LXX)* 1.

197. Ibid., (PG 29, 281AB; Way: 193–94). Note: the corresponding Psalm 29 in the NRSV retains little of what Basil discusses here, leaving behind the Septuagintal subtitle, "ἐξοδίου σκηνῆς," and saying nothing of rams or the holy court. Agnes Clare Way has provided a translation of the psalm as Basil understood it: "Bring to the Lord, O children of God; bring to the Lord the offspring of rams. Bring to the Lord glory and honor; bring to the Lord glory to his name; adore the Lord in his holy court." Agnes

Basil matches the tabernacle mentioned in the subtitle of the psalm with Paul's use of the same word to describe the body in 2 Corinthians, so the psalm becomes about exiting the body at the end of life and entering the heavenly places.

Further on in the sermon, Basil continues to reappropriate meanings by allegory. Not only is the tabernacle meant to symbolize the human body, but the *holy court*[198] in which the worshipper renders praise is not the temple or the synagogue, according to Basil, but "it is possible to consider the court in a still loftier sense as the heavenly way of life. Therefore, *they that are planted* here *in the house of the Lord*, which is the church of the living God, there *shall flourish in the courts of our God* [Ps. 91:14, LXX]."[199] Regarding verse three, *The voice of the Lord is upon the waters*, Basil makes it clear that the voice is not to be taken as an embodied activity but as a soundless and breathless, immediate communication from God. Likewise, the waters, which recur in subsequent verses, are first explained in natural terms but are soon given an allegorical rendering. First, Basil points out that the voice of the Lord is on the waters because the waters of the earth, as all things that exist in creation, give glory to God by their very existence and nature, "since Scripture shows that every creature all but cries out, proclaiming the Creator."[200] Next, Basil suggests that there is a second level of meaning: "The waters are also the saints, because rivers flow from within them [cf. John 7:38], that is, spiritual teaching which refreshes the souls of the hearers."[201] When the psalm reads, *The Lord is upon many waters* [Ps. 28:3, LXX], then it means that the Lord dwells with the saints. The original meaning has not been dissolved or discarded by this enterprise, but has been absorbed into a second stratum of meaning drawn from references to New Testament texts. Basil can be found in many instances to have employed such an allegorical method, particularly to psalms.

There are also examples where Basil first explores an allegorical rendering, but then is insistent that the historical meaning also be retained. A clear example is his exegesis of Psalm 7:6, *Rise up, O Lord, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake, O my God; you have appointed a judgment.* The Septuagint version (Psalm 7:7, LXX) begins with the two words *Arise, Lord*

Clare Way, trans., *Saint Basil: Exegetic Homilies*, FC 46 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 193n1.

198. Psalm 28:2b (LXX): *Adore the Lord in his holy court.*

199. "Δυνατὸν δὲ αὐλὴν ἔτι ἐπαναβεβηκότως νοῆσαι τήν ἐπουράνιον διαγωγήν" *Hom. on Psalm 28 (LXX)* 3 (PG 29, 288C; Way: 198).

200. Ibid. (PG 29, 289B; Way: 200).

201. Ibid., 4 (PG 29, 292C; Way: 201).

(ἀνάστηθι, κύριε), which strikes Basil as a clear reference to the resurrection of Jesus: "The prophet prays that the mystery of the resurrection be accomplished now, or the elevation of the cross."[202] Basil renders the second half of the verse, *And arise, O Lord my God, in the precept which you have commanded*. Of this verse, Basil preaches,

> This saying can also be referred to the mystery of the resurrection, since the prophet is exhorting the judge to arise in order to avenge every sin and to bring to fulfillment the commands previously laid on us. It can also be accepted in reference to the state at that time of the affairs of the prophet, who was exhorting God to rise in order to avenge the precept which he had enjoined.[203]

As strong as the tendency may have been in Basil's time to concentrate only on the prophetic foretelling of the resurrection, Basil insists on also retaining the historical meaning as he exegetes the passage.

Likewise, in his *Homily on Psalm 44 (LXX)*, Basil demonstrates that he is willing to give preference to the literal meaning rendered in context even when a theological advantage stands to be gained by allowing an allegorical interpretation. On the verse, *My heart overflows with a goodly theme* [Ps 45:1],[204] Basil acknowledges that many have seen it fitting to refer this verse to the relationship between the Father and the Son, that is the eternal generation of the Word from the Father, "But it seems to me that these words refer to the person of the prophet, since what follows the saying no longer makes the explanation concerning the Father equally smooth for us."[205] Basil allows context to trump theology here, even in the face of a considerable tradition of applying this verse to the Father-Son relationship within the Trinity. Of this choice, William Tieck writes, "Any apparent spiritual or doctrinal advantages to be gained by questionable exegetical procedure are readily relinquished by Basil in favor of a straightforward and logically respectable interpretation," one of the choices in which Tieck locates "the stirrings of an advanced exegetical consciousness" in Basil.[206]

202. *Hom. on Psalm* 7 3 (PG 29, 236B; Way: 170).

203. Ibid., 4 (PG 29, 236C; Way: 170).

204. "Ἐξηρεύξατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν." (LXX).

205. *Hom. on Psalm 44 (LXX)* 3 (PG 29, 393A; Way: 280). The Psalm reads: *My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe*. Basil finds it unsuitable to divorce the first personal pronoun from the second.

206. Tieck, "Bible," 190, 187.

In general, Basil practiced a tempered Origenist hermeneutic of Scripture, preferring the literal but allowing the spiritual, in firm and optimistic faith in the continuing activity of the Holy Spirit rendering the proper meaning to the attentive and pious reader. Basil best sums up his own exegetical practice in his treatise *Concerning Baptism*, where he approaches an interpretation of his most hallowed verse, Matthew 28:19:

> He further bade them: *Going, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit* [Matt. 28:19]. I think that we must by faith grasp and understand each of these words and speak, according as words are granted us in answer to the prayers of all, at the opening of our mouth [cf. Ps. 51:15]. It is written: *If you do not believe, you shall not understand* [Isa. 7:9], and also: *I have believed, therefore have I spoken* [Ps. 115:1, LXX]. Now, I am of the opinion that the nouns and verbs and the content of the Holy Scriptures do not have as regards God and his Christ or the holy prophets and evangelists and apostles the simple and conventional acceptation of ordinary use. On the contrary, we should examine them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with a pious intention, not all together but by parts, according as each may contribute to the exposition of sound doctrine. We should reflect upon them devoutly [εὐσεβῶς] and direct our thoughts to a consideration of the rules and teachings of the devout life [εὐσεβείας]. It is most important that we be observant and attentive to [προσέχειν] every word and choose the sense that is in keeping with our heavenly calling.[207]

For Basil, the important thing is to pay attention to the reading of Scripture as an exercise of bringing one's mind into conformity, into harmony, with the mind of the Spirit.

There is little formulaic in his practice, as methodology is a uniquely modern concern;[208] but he is more consistent in his practice than is often credited, particularly when it is understood that he is consuming the body of the text—practicing a reading with fire as Dawson has described in Origen—to articulate the spiritual meaning hovering over the words on the page. The first layer of meaning cannot be eradicated; it must be digested and absorbed into the second layer. There are always two levels of meaning in patristic exegesis, the

207. *Concerning Baptism* 1.2 (PG 31, 1536BD; Wagner: 357). Cf. *Eun.* 1.14.20–39 (SC 1:222).

208. De Lubac, *History*, 161.

plain and the spiritual sense.[209] Basil resides for the most part in the plain sense, but acknowledges and even dotes upon the spiritual sense when he feels that this is the proper application and proper reception of the verse under the continuing tutelage of the Spirit, who is the fire that both roasts the raw meat of the text and illumines the mind to see the spiritual sense. To understand the continuing activity of the Spirit, Basil appeals by allusion to Psalm 51:15, *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise*, and by quotation he appeals to Psalm 115:1 (LXX); the sum of these two verses is the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is active in the interpretation of the written word of Scripture. When a Christian stands to speak of the words written and inspired in the Scriptures, Basil claims that the Spirit speaks through the interpreter, providing the proper reading. Tieck writes in summary, "Basil ventures the bold step of making the Bible interpreted by the Spirit-filled conscience of the believer the ultimate seat of authority."[210] There is something adventurous indeed about laying authority on the subjective experience of the reader, but Basil was confident that the Spirit would be faithful and that the meaning would be found, as the passages of inspired Scripture were read in divine light.

The Voice of the Church

Basil's spiritual exegesis is an argument for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit based on the activity of God. Basil argues that if there is a coherent meaning to the Christian Bible as a whole—a meaning that transcends both the crisis of interpretation brought on by the coalescence of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the crisis of interpretation found in the cognitive distance between a text and its reader—that meaning is founded upon the very coherence of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

This Bible was more than a resource among other ancient sources. It was, for the Fathers, the source of cultural unity and a new language for a new people. Robert Wilken writes,

> The Bible formed Christians into a people and gave them a language . . . [and] created a distinctive universe of meaning. As its words took up residence in the minds and hearts of Christian thinkers, it gave

209. "In Christian tradition there are only two senses, the plain sense, sometimes called the literal or historical sense (in the medieval distich, *littera gesta docet*, 'the literal sense teaches us what happened'), and the Christological or spiritual sense, which can take different forms. The distinctive feature of allegory or the spiritual sense is that what happened in the Old Testament is viewed in light of what has come about through the death and Resurrection of Christ." Wilken, "Allegory," 201. Cf. *Spirit*, 70.

210. Tieck, "Bible," 228.

> them a vocabulary that subtly shaped their patterns of thought. . . . Thinking took place through exegesis, and the language of the Bible became the language of Christian thought.[211]

For the Fathers, and no less for Basil, the Spirit was the source of this Bible; the Spirit was the font of this living stream of language.

Basil insists that the act of the Holy Spirit in inspiration is not the end of the activity of communication of knowledge of God through the Scriptures, but only the first act. Just as in the paradigm of the Spirit as Creator, the first act (creation) is only the beginning of revelation, likewise in Basil's understanding of the Holy Spirit as rhetor, the inspiration of Scripture is only the beginning of the communication. Though the Spirit has provided the words on the page, this does not guarantee the reception of the necessary or divinely intended meaning. It was possible, in Basil's view, for the words as they existed on the page to be misunderstood, interpreted "in a way contrary to the intention of the Spirit."[212] The Spirit was not only the originator of these words for Basil but also the one who continued to govern their proper application. The Spirit had provided the words, in fact, to be an occasion for the spiritual direction and sanctification of the believer. The Spirit had written the words so that the Spirit could also teach them.

Basil argues that the Spirit is an active and divine teacher in the life of the Christian. In the midst of his argument with Eunomius, he makes the following claim:

> And just as our Lord is the true teacher [διδάσκαλος] in accordance with the verse: *Call no one your teacher* [διδάσκαλον] *on earth … for one is your teacher* [καθηγητής]*, Christ* [Matt. 23:9–10], so too the Lord himself testified that the Holy Spirit teaches [διδάσκειν] all those who have come to believe in the name of Lord, when he said: *The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send, will teach* [διδάξει] *you all things* [John 14:26].[213]

211. Wilken, *Spirit*, 52, 76, and 77.

212. *Eun.* 2.3.22–25 (SC 2:18). See also at *Eun.* 2.15.7–9.

213. *Eun.* 3.4.20–27 (SC 2:158). Basil has combined Matthew 23:9, *Call no one your father on earth*, with Matthew 23:10, *For one is your teacher, Christ*, and has replaced "father" with "teacher" (διδάσκαλον). Matthew 23:10 begins with the exhortation, *Do not be called teachers* (καθηγηταί). A καθηγητής is an instructor who leads by example.

Basil is making the argument that the uniqueness of Jesus' teaching authority extends also to the Spirit. The Spirit is a teacher in a way that no one on earth may be called such. The Spirit is a teacher associated with the authority of Christ himself as well as with the Father in heaven. To untangle Basil's exegetical moves and try to draw out his argument, it appears to be this: Jesus Christ was a true teacher by example in the incarnation, and now the Spirit is the true teacher under the same authority but teaching in a different manner. The Spirit teaches the believer by overcoming the crisis of interpretation, by binding the text to a meaning during the spiritual reading of a text. Where Jesus' life instructs by example, the Spirit instructs by illumination of the mind.

In his *Homily on Psalm 1*, Basil begins with a four-paragraph prologue extolling the beauty and worth of the Psalter. Rufinus translated this prologue into Latin along with a few of Basil's sermons on the Psalms and other writings shortly after Basil's death. His translation of Basil's prologue is found at the beginning of many editions of Augustine's commentaries on the Psalms.[214] For many years the prologue was attributed to Augustine, and it has made its way down the course of history into a number of monastic handbooks on the Psalter. For Basil, his encomium of the Psalter is equally a tribute of praise to the work of the Holy Spirit, who is like a rhetor instructing the soul in spiritual language. Basil begins with the strong proposition that the Psalms are the fruit of the inspiration of the Spirit of God. As was quoted above, the opening line of Basil's sermon reads, "*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful* [2 Tim. 3:16], composed by the Spirit for this reason, namely, that we men, each and all of us, as if in a general hospital for souls, may select the remedy for his own condition."[215] The Bible contains many different types of teaching given for different purposes; that is, to heal different ailments of the soul and body. Prophets teach certain things, histories produce important types of information, the law and the proverbs have their place, "but the book of the Psalms has taken over what is profitable from all. It foretells coming events; it recalls history; it frames laws for life; it suggests what must be done; and, in general, it is the common treasury of good doctrine."[216] As a medicine chest of cures, the Psalter

214. "This prologue is also found in many manuscripts and editions of St. Augustine's commentaries on the psalms and was by many attributed to St. Augustine. However, it has now been shown that the prologue as found in St. Augustine's works is the prologue of St. Basil's homilies as translated by Rufinus." Way, *Exegetic*, viii–ix, 151n1. Cf. Paul J. Fedwick, *Biblioteca Basiliana Universalis*, vol 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 1003.

215. *Hom. Psalm 1* 1 (PG 29, 209A; Way: 151).

216. Ibid. (PG 29, 212A; Way: 151).

is complete. There is no one who cannot find the cure for what ails their soul within the Psalms, Basil preaches,

> The old wounds of souls it cures completely, and to the recently wounded it brings speedy improvement; the diseased it treats, and the unharmed it preserves. On the whole, it effaces, as far as is possible, the passions, which subtly exercise dominion over souls during the lifetime of man, and it does this with a certain orderly persuasion and sweetness which produces sound thoughts. . . . A psalm implies serenity of soul; it is the author of peace, which calms bewildering and seething thoughts. For, it softens the wrath of the soul, and what is unbridled it chastens. A psalm forms friendships, unites those separated, conciliates those at enmity. Who, indeed, can still consider as an enemy him with whom he has uttered the same prayer to God? So that psalmody, bringing about choral singing, a bond, as it were, toward unity, and joining the people into a harmonious union of one choir, produces also the greatest of blessings, charity. A psalm is a city of refuge from the demons; a means of inducing help from the angels, a weapon in fears by night, a rest from toils by day, a safeguard for infants, an adornment for those at the height of their vigor, a consolation for the elders, a most fitting ornament for women. It gives company to the solitary; it rids the market place of excesses; it is the elementary exposition of beginners, the improvement of those advancing, the solid support of the perfect, the voice of the Church. It brightens the feast days; it creates a sorrow which is in accordance with God. For, a psalm calls forth a tear even from a heart of stone. A psalm is the work of angels, a heavenly institution, the spiritual incense.[217]

It is easy to see how such prose retained its value in the posterity of the Christian church, in any translation. Basil praises the completeness and fullness of the Psalms for the edification of the soul and training in virtue. The Psalms contain "perfect theology, a prediction of the coming of Christ in the flesh, a threat of judgment, a hope of resurrection, a fear of punishment, promises of glory, an unveiling of mysteries; all things, as if in some great public treasury, are stored up in the book of Psalms."[218] The Psalms lack for nothing. Reading them is useful for instruction and can actually alter the affections of the heart. They can calm the mind and bring clarity of thought. They can unite those who are at

217. Ibid., 1, 2 (PG 29, 212A–213A; Way: 151, 152–153).

odds with one another. They can put the spirit at rest in the harmony of their voice of praise.

Toward the end of the passage quoted, Basil says that the book of Psalms educates the Christian in language: "It is the elementary exposition of beginners, the improvement of those advancing, the solid support of the perfect, the voice of the Church."[219] The reader cannot but recognize the voice of Basil the rhetor in this sentence. The Psalter is the textbook that can teach the saint the proper use of language, first by imitation or rote memorization, as a young child would do with the classics of Greek culture during a course of *paideia*. But there is room in the Psalms also to advance, improving as one gains the skills of language and begins to understand the stratifications of language and the variable meanings of words. In the end, even the master of rhetoric will find fruitful and solid fare in studying the words of the Psalms. Basil is not the instructor, however; he is not the rhetor. The language instructor is the Holy Spirit.

Basil's treatment of the Psalms is not unique. The Psalter was praised by many, and Eusebius of Caesarea had written a full commentary that was celebrated by many.[220] Athanasius had also recorded an encomium praising the Psalms, which he professes to have received from an elder of the Church. In it, the elder praises the comprehensiveness of the Psalter, which "includes the special subjects of all the other books," and "generalizes in song matters that are treated in detail in other books."[221] The beauty of the Psalms, he exclaims, is not for rhetorical flourish, not

> to tickle the aesthetic palate. . . . It is rather for the soul's own profit that the Psalms are sung. . . . For to sing the Psalms demands such concentration of a person's whole being on them that, in doing it, his usual disharmony of mind and corresponding bodily confusion is resolved, just as the notes of several flutes are brought by harmony to one effect.[222]

218. Ibid. (PG 29, 213B; Way: 153). Cf. *Ep.* 2, in which Basil describes the benefit to the soul of reading the Scriptures to Gregory of Nazianzus as he invites Gregory to join him in his ascetic experiment at Annesi.

219. Ibid. (PG 29, 213A; Way: 153).

220. Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms* (in fragments: PG 23, 72–1396; PG 24, 9–76; and PG 30, 81–104). His preface exists in a Latin translation misattributed to Heironymus (PL 26, 1299–1305) but does not appear to have been a direct source for Basil. Cf. Mauritii Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, vol 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974), 264.

221. Athanasius, *Interpretation of Psalms* 9 (PG 27, 20AB; Anonymous: 102).

222. Ibid., 29 (PG 27, 41AB; Anonymous: 114).

For that reason, Athanasius's unknown elder recommends that the Psalms be sung and chanted "just as they are written, so that the holy men who gave them to us, recognizing their own words, may pray with us, yes and even more that the Spirit, who spoke by the saints, recognizing the selfsame words that he inspired, may join us in them too."[223] The letter continues to suggest moments when particular psalms can be an aid to particular situations, much as Basil does above, and it seems likely that Basil was exposed to this and other similar introductions to the Psalms.

Basil's treatment is unique, however, because he does not stop at praising the comprehensiveness and beauty of the Psalms. Basil moves into the personal intent and motivation of the Spirit as the author of these Psalms. Where others might say the Psalms were inspired by the Spirit for the benefit of the church, Basil would say that the Psalms were *written* by the Spirit as an instrument of the Spirit's *instruction* toward sanctification. Basil penetrates into the personal motivations of the Spirit in writing the Psalms and in fashioning their form and content. He locates the form and structure of the Psalms on the intentional will and personal motivation of the Spirit, and it illustrates that for Basil the Scriptures were an opportunity to argue for the full divinity of the Spirit.

Basil preaches in his prologue to the Psalms that these words were not fashioned by men alone, nor did they fall into their order by chance. The Holy Spirit set them in their order for a purpose and with a goal in mind: the perfection of human souls. The Psalms were carefully fashioned by the Holy Spirit to be the most effective instrument of instruction.

> When, indeed, the Holy Spirit saw that the human race was guided only with difficulty toward virtue, and that, because of our inclination toward pleasure, we were neglectful of an upright life, what did he do? The delight of melody he mingled with the doctrines so that by the pleasantness and softness of the sound heard we might receive without perceiving it the benefit of the words, just as wise physicians who, when giving the fastidious rather bitter drugs to drink, frequently smear the cup with honey. Therefore, he devised for us these harmonious melodies of the Psalms, that they who are children in age, or even those who are youthful in disposition might to all appearances chant but, in reality, become trained in soul.[224]

223. Ibid., 31 (PG 27, 41D–44A; Anonymous: 116).

224. *Hom. Psalm 1* 1 (PG 29, 212B; Way: 152)

In Basil's view, the Psalms were created by the Holy Spirit in response to a certain problem, a problem surrounding the education of human souls and their training in holiness unto perfection. He continues the thought to point out that few walk around the market or go through their day of labors at home or in the field chanting doctrines pulled out of the apostles or moral challenges gleaned from the prophets, but many find it easy to memorize and repeat what they find in the Psalms. The words run with a melody, balance, and harmony that bring power to the language and move the soul in their hearing.

All the virtues of classical rhetoric are present in Basil's encomium on the Psalter, and they are all attributed to the wisdom and instructive prowess of the Spirit. The Spirit crafted the Psalms in beautiful and harmonious language so that they could be easily accompanied by musical scores and become not only a resource for liturgy, but a songbook of praise.

> Oh! The wise invention of the teacher [διδασκάλου] who contrived that while we were singing we should at the same time learn something useful; by this means, too, the teachings are in a certain way impressed more deeply on our minds. Even a forceful lesson does not always endure, but what enters the mind with joy and pleasure somehow becomes more firmly impressed upon it.[225]

The Spirit is the teacher who has crafted a perfect lesson, able to impress its contents deep in the mind of the student. These are not idle lessons, but lessons in all the classical virtues and virtues uniquely promised as the fruit of the Spirit:[226]

> What, in fact, can you not learn from the Psalms? Can you not learn the grandeur of courage? The exactness of justice? The nobility of self-control? The perfection of prudence? A manner of penance? The measure of patience? And whatever other good things you might mention?[227]

Unlike his former instructors in rhetoric whom we met above, the instructor who provides the Psalms will not leave the student lacking in any virtue, nor will the power of rhetoric be deployed only for its own enjoyment, but for the betterment of the soul for eternity and the perfection of the human being as a

225. Ibid., 2 (PG 29, 213A; Way: 153).

226. Cf. Galatians 5:22–23.

227. *Hom. Psalm 1* 2 (PG 29, 213AB; Way: 153).

whole. On our own, writes Basil as he begins to interpret Psalm 1, we would lose motivation in the great spiritual struggle for virtue,

> Therefore the common director [διορθωτής] of our lives, the great teacher [διδάσκαλος], the Spirit of truth, wisely and cleverly set forth the rewards, in order that, rising above the present labors, we might press on in spirit to the enjoyment of eternal blessings. *Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly* [Ps. 1:1].[228]

The Spirit is the teacher of language, the director of the soul engaged in learning.

In this prologue to the Psalms, Basil has taken all that he knew of the great office of the rhetor and attributed it to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit crafts language that moves the soul. The Spirit writes with eloquence, balance of phrase, harmony of voice, and all the qualities that provide for the earnest student of language to advance to the heights of rhetorical prowess. The Spirit is a director and a teacher, forming lessons that will have a lasting impact and impress themselves deep in the minds of the receptive student. Most importantly, the Spirit is an instructor who guides the student in spiritual formation. The instruction makes one holy. There is no inherent value in the beauty of the language, but the beauty and rhetorical charm were added so that the words, like desperately needed medicine, would be received by the sin-sick soul. The movement produced by reading the Psalms is purposive and intentional. Where the great masters of rhetoric could move a mind toward any end, the Spirit moves the soul toward its perfection and the enjoyment of the eternal blessings of God.

Too often discussions of hermeneutics devolve into the particularities of methodology, as though the figure in question were formulating an equation of meaning. Basil was not looking for an equation to apply to the Scriptures to extract the real meaning from them; he was listening for the Spirit's direction in their reading and approaching the texts in the confidence that the Spirit would speak through them. The same text could produce different meanings at different times, but it was attention to the work of the Spirit that counted for Basil. To call Basil's hermeneutic a spiritual exegesis is not to suggest that Basil prefers the meaning that refers to spiritual or supernatural things; rather it is to claim that Basil expected the personal presence of the Holy Spirit to accompany the reading of Holy Scripture in the church and among its believers. Basil's hermeneutic is a hermeneutic of application. The inspired books of Holy

228. Ibid., 3 (PG 29, 216AB; Way: 155)

Scripture were not, in his view, simply revered ancient texts at the core of Christian culture; the Scriptures were the guide and norm of Christian faith and practice.[229] When Basil asks "What does this text mean?," inherent in the question are the questions "What does this text incite us to do? What then is our practice? How then shall we live?" Or, even more importantly, "What is the Spirit teaching us in the reading of this written word?" Basil attempts the intersection of the imminently practical and the esoterically spiritual, confident that the Spirit will continue to intrude on the *ordinaria* of everyday life.

This sensibility is apparent in his *Ethics*, which is essentially a list of Scripture verses from the New Testament with their application for faith and practice. In Rule 26 of the *Ethics*, Basil writes, "That every word and deed should be ratified by the testimony of the Holy Scripture to confirm the good and cause shame to the wicked."[230] It is apparent in his insistence in the *Shorter Rules* that no action should be pressed upon any monk without reference to the appropriate Bible verse that requires such an action and with the attendant guidance of the Holy Spirit.

> Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of the Holy Spirit, says, *He will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears* [John 16:13], and of himself, *The Son can do nothing on his own* [John 5:19], and again, *For I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me* [John 12:49-50]. Who then would succumb to such insanity as to dare to speak of his own authority on such concepts as require the Holy Spirit as a guide? These concepts require the Holy Spirit, so that he may lead straight into the way of the truth in both thought and word—and in practice. It is he who leads the blind and those in darkness since they are renewed in the illumination of the Sun of Righteousness [cf. Mal. 4:2], our Lord Jesus Christ, just as if by a ray, by his commandments.

229. "Basil notes that the reading of the Scriptures provides 'a most important path for the discovery of duty' (*Ep.* 2) since Scripture both tells and shows us how we should live." Martens, "Ascetic," 1118.

230. *Ethics* 26 (PG 31, 744C; Wagner: 106). Basil lists two supporting verses: Matthew 4:3-4, where Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by Satan and responds *One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God* and Acts 2:4, 12-17, the account of the original Pentecost which reads in part, *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability,* and *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.* This selection of verses illustrates how directly Basil ties the activity of the Spirit to the practical application of the Scriptures.

> *For the commandment of the Lord*, it says, *is bright, illumining the eyes* [Ps. 19:8]. Now some of the actions and words common among us have been established by the commandment of the Lord in the Holy Scripture, but others are passed over in silence. Nobody has been granted universal authority over what has been written; neither may anyone practice what is forbidden nor leave undone what is prescribed.[231]

In this instance, Basil suggests that the proper understanding of a biblical mandate is an illumination to moral action. Illumination has been transferred from the inner recesses of the mind of the reader into the community where action takes place. So then, as important to Basil as the fact that these inspired texts might reveal some hidden meaning and knowledge of God is the fact that these inspired texts are intended for the use of the Holy Spirit in guiding and directing the Christian life in the holy community. The Spirit is not only the source of the original inspiration of the texts, but also gives the texts their enduring authority by using them in his direction of the lives of the saints. Their authority is as founded in the Spirit's use of them in application as in their original inspiration. The Spirit who is perfecting the saints has authority to apply Scripture to the life of Christians in a way that moves them toward their own perfection, and makes them holy—as only God who is holy can make holy.

Unlike contemporary understandings of the prophetic voice as a countercultural moral challenge to the majority, the Fathers did not claim that the Spirit gave the prophets unusual or surpassing moral authority over their communities, but that the Spirit inspired the prophets with knowledge of future events. In fact, the moral authority of the prophets was dependent upon the proving out of the predictions; the proof was in the prediction. If a prophet could predict the future—that is, if the writings of a prophet could be seen as having been fulfilled—then the prophet had been proven. This was an inspired prophet, empowered by the Holy Spirit to foresee future events. This is clear in Theophilus of Antioch, the second-century apologist. In his account of his own conversion, he includes the moment when he began to read the Scriptures of the prophets:

> I met with the sacred Scriptures of the holy prophets, who also by the Spirit of God foretold the things that have already happened,

231. *Shorter Rule* 1 (PG 31, 1080D–1081B). Cf. Amand de Mendieta, *L'Ascèse Monastique de Saint Basile* (Maredsous: Éditions de Maredsous, 1949), 82; Anna Silvas, *The* Asketikon *of St. Basil the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 274.

> just as they came to pass, and the things now occurring as they are now happening, and things future in the order in which they shall be accomplished. Admitting, therefore, the proof which events happening as predicted afford, I do not disbelieve, but I believe, obedient to God.[232]

The predictive power of the prophets was regarded as proof of the divine inspiration of their writings. Prophets were given visions of future events by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Angels also could not foresee the future under their own power, but the Holy Spirit could grant them the power to do so. Basil, for example, writes,

> Not even Gabriel could have announced events to come, unless the Spirit gave him foreknowledge—since one of the gifts distributed by the Spirit is prophecy. Where did the angel who interpreted the mysterious vision of Daniel, the man of desires [cf. Dan. 9-10], obtain the wisdom enabling him to teach hidden things if not from the Holy Spirit? It is the unique function of the Spirit to reveal mysteries, as it is written, *God has revealed (them) to us through the Spirit* [1 Cor. 2:10].[233]

Basil claims that the Holy Spirit produces the predictive power in the prophets and the angels. This not only buttresses the prophet's moral authority, but provides a proof for the measure of a prophet's connection to the inspiration of the Spirit—namely the veracity of his predictions. Prophecy in the patristic mind was not an authoritative voice of the minority viewpoint issuing superior moral challenges to the majority. Prophecy was the voice of God in the midst of the people, and it was proved out by its predictive power granted only by the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Basil was thoughtful and intentional about the relationship between time and eternity. Only God is

232. *Theophilus to Autolycus* 1.14 (PG 6, 1045A; ANF 2:168–69). Cf. 2.9. Justin Martyr makes the same argument that the prophets are authoritative due to their predictive power (*First Apology* 30–45) and he also uses the predictive power of Jesus as an apologetic device, proving his divinity: "We are more assured that all the things taught by him [Jesus Christ] are so, since whatever he predicted before is seen in fact coming to pass; and this is the work of God, to announce something before it happens, and as it was predicted so to show it happening." *First Apology* 12.10 (Marcovich: 49; Barnard: 30).

233. *Spir.* 16.38.69–77 (SC 17:382; Anderson: 64). Cf. *Against Eunomius* 2.1 and *Homily on the Verse: "In the Beginning Was the Word"* 3, where Basil clearly believes that the Inspirer of Scripture anticipated his contemporary theological disputes.

outside of time in his view. The Spirit's ability to inspire a scriptural writer to know future events demonstrates that the Spirit is outside of the time continuum in a way that is only possible to God. In this way, the predictive power of the divinely inspired Scriptures—whatever we may make of the claim in our own time—was one more case Basil made for the full divinity of the Spirit.

Basil saw hermeneutics, the practice of spiritual exegesis, as something that bolstered his argument that the Holy Spirit is God. He used it as a way to display the divine activity of the Spirit and lead his reader to the conclusion that the Spirit is fully divine. Basil was aware of the crisis of interpretation. He was aware of a certain cognitive distance between a text and its meaning. He first contacted this crisis in his own engagement with classical rhetoric and in the desire to teach his students how to discriminate virtue from vice while reading classics. Next he came to terms with the crisis in the context of the canonization of the Christian Bible as a coherent whole and the exegetical habits this canonization necessitated. The allegorical or spiritual reading of Scripture necessitated by the Christian confession of coherence between the Scriptures of old and the apostolic witness, the Old Testament and the New, is in the end an absurdity. John David Dawson puts it best when he writes,

> For the idea that the prophet Isaiah had, in his own right and not only as a consequence of some later reader's strange interpretation, once referred in some oblique fashion to the person of Jesus who had not yet appeared in history, and, in so doing, sought to render *intelligible* a certain divine performance, is, for most of us, historiographically absurd.[234]

But, as Dawson explores in his volume, the focus must be placed on "divine performance;" that is, on divine activity received by the church and the individual believer—what Basil and the Cappadocians call *energeia*. Basil is aware of the absurdity, he is aware of the crisis of interpretation, and of the breadth of the chasm between a text and its meaning. It is precisely in Basil's embrace of this absurdity that his defense of the divinity of the Holy Spirit is made.

There is no coherence to the Christian Bible without the activity of the Holy Spirit. Basil knew when he suggested that the Holy Spirit is the solution to the crisis of interpretation that he was making a claim for the full divinity of the Spirit. To summarize Basil's argument for the divinity of the Spirit on the basis of the Spirit's divine activity as rhetor, one need only take stock of the qualities

234. Dawson, *Christian*, 6.

or characteristics that the Spirit must have in order to perform the activities that Basil describes. Such a Spirit must be outside of the continuum of time, because he foresees future events; a coherent personality with a singular voice inspiring the writers of Scripture throughout history; simultaneously omnipresent and available to all individuals; knowledgeable of the mind of God; revealer of the Son of God; and able to lead the believer toward the ultimate good. While some of these acts could conceivably be performed by a created spirit, not all of them can. Taken together they constitute another claim for the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

5

Conclusion: To Speak of the Spirit of God

> [We believe] in the Almighty Father, and the Only-Begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit, who is God [καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ θεῷ]. How much longer will we hide the lamp under the bushel and withhold from others the full knowledge of the Godhead when it ought to already be set on a stand shedding light on all churches and minds and to all the fullness of the economy, no longer by means of metaphors, or intellectual sketches, but by distinct declaration? This is truly a full presentation of theology to those counted worthy of grace in Christ Jesus Himself, our Lord, to whom be glory, honor, and power for ever. Amen.[1]

With these words, Gregory of Nazianzus closed his oration in 372 accepting episcopal oversight of his father's church.[2] Gregory was tired of keeping the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as God under a bushel, wearied by using metaphors and shadow sketches to gesture toward the doctrine. He wanted to make it clear as day that as much as the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is also God. His opponent, of sorts, is his dear friend Basil. Basil had made it clear that it was not his intent to mark out the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in open terminology.

In the previous year, Gregory had been challenged by a group of monks at a party who (even before they began drinking, he notes) criticized a public address given by Basil for not being strong enough on the divinity of the Spirit.[3] Gregory warned Basil that even theological allies were charging him with "shrinking back."[4] Although they commended Gregory for his clear theology of

1. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 12.6 (PG 35, 849BC).

2. Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 158–60.

3. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 58.3 (Gallay: 74).

the Spirit, they felt that Basil's reserve cloaked a faulty pneumatology. Gregory had spoken clearly about the Spirit and asked Basil, "How long should we hide this light under a bushel?" Basil replied that he had no time for this dispute.[5] Gregory did not take up the issue of the divinity of the Holy Spirit again until his theological orations were delivered after Basil's death. Much has been made of the disagreement between Gregory and Basil, but in fact, when Gregory presents his uninhibited and fully disclosed pneumatology he claims to be presenting no more than what Basil himself would have confessed.[6] Gregory of Nazianzus does however use two terms about the Holy Spirit that Basil does not in any extant text: he declares the Spirit to be God (θεός) and declares the Spirit consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος).[7] If Basil also believed these things, why did he draw back from openly declaring them?

A few theories are still being circulated to explain Basil's reserve. One is that Basil lacked erudition and theological insight. It is my hope that the preceding pages will contribute to dismissing this theory. With all the insight Basil displays, if he had wanted to state his view of the Spirit using the terminology of the Trinitarian dispute he would have. The accompanying proposal is that Basil did not say these things because he did not believe them to be true or recognize that they are theologically necessary to the Pro-Nicene position.[8] The more prevalent theory is that Basil avoided these

4. Cf. Hebrews 10:39.

5. "I have never before given proof of my opinions about God to this man's associates, nor do I have any response to his accusations to offer now." *Ep.* 71.1.22–25 (Courtonne 1:167). We do not know the identity of the challenger from Gregory or Basil.

6. "This, then, is my position with regard to these things, and I hope it may always be my position, and that of whosoever is dear to me: to worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three persons, one Godhead undivided in honor and glory and substance and kingdom, as one of our own inspired philosophers not long departed demonstrated." *Oration* 31.28 (Barbel: 266–68). The "philosopher" is Basil. On the disagreement between them, see: Benoît Pruche, *Basile de Césarée: Sur le Saint-Esprit*, SC 17 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 79–85, 101–4; Jean Gribomont, "Intransigence and Irenicism in Saint Basil's 'De Spiritu Sancto,'" in *Word and Spirit: A Monastic Review* (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1979), 113–16; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 157–60.

7. "Τί οὖν; θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα; πάνυ γε. Τί οὖν, ὁμοούσιον; εἴπερ θεός," "What then, is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well then is he consubstantial? Yes, if he is God." *Oration* 31.10 (Barbel: 236).

8. Anthony Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 48 (1981): 204–5. But later he retracts it in another work: "Despite all this willingness on Basil's part to unite the Holy Spirit in common worship with the Father and the Son, he is curiously reticent about the actual assertion of deity and consubstantiality of all three persons, a diplomatic reticence which the Creed of Constantinople also shared. . . . [Basil's] concern to preserve the fragile peace of the Church made him unwilling to introduce a further possible split in the ranks of the orthodox. It was something of a diplomatic triumph to have restored the Creed of Nicaea to

topics out of ecumenical, or consensus-building, concern. This is how, in fact, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa directed their apologetic defense of Basil after his death and it has remained the dominant theory since.[9] Basil's terminological reserve nevertheless abides as a mystery, and what makes it "curious" (Meredith), "noteworthy" (Ayres), and even "notorious" (Behr) is that Basil stops short of saying exactly what all of his theology implies, and what he undoubtedly believed—that the Holy Spirit is God, of one essence with the Father and the Son.[10]

By way of conclusion, this chapter surveys what Basil actually did say about the Holy Spirit in the community of the Trinity and summarizes the results of the last three chapters to conclude the argument that Basil advocated for the divinity of the Holy Spirit by illustrating the Holy Spirit's divine activities. Basil is a theologian who takes seriously that his work is not done in God's absence. Theology is not talking about God in his absence, but recognizing the work of God in one's life as God is present. Basil is a man who seems to have believed that knowledge of God is beyond language, and that words must be deployed as sparingly as possible to refer to what has been revealed by the activities of God, since words only have the capacity to limit meaning.

Setting aside what Basil did not say, there are a number of claims that he does make concerning the community of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit's share in it. Basil declares that the Holy Spirit is "counted in the divine and blessed Trinity."[11] The Holy Spirit is bound to God not just in a particular occasion in time, but by a community of nature (διὰ τὴν ἐκ φύσεως κοινωνίαν).[12] The

its proper place within the Church. To add something further to it or to propose a new doctrine was dangerous. Basil almost certainly held the doctrine himself. His celebrated 'economy' forbade him to put the unity to the test." Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 33. Christopher Beeley, however, agrees with the earlier Meredith and asserts that despite his superficial use of Pro-Nicene terminology, "Basil's understanding of the Spirit's divinity is not, in the end, all that different from the doctrine of an Anti-Nicene figure like Eusebius of Caesarea." Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 300.

9. Pruche, *Basile*, 94–104; and Gribomont, "Intransigence," 116–30. Where Pruche and Gribomont disagree is whether Basil kept his terminological reserve for fear of retribution by authorities and opponents (Pruche) or out of genuine ecumenical concern (Gribomont).

10. Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 33; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 217; and John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 314. *Ep.* 8 (Courtonne 1:22–37), which contains both the claim that the Spirit is God and that the Spirit is of one essence with God, is not written by Basil but most likely by Evagrius Ponticus. It represents a poignant summary of post-Constantinopolitan Christian theology.

11. "Τὸ τῇ θείᾳ καὶ μακαρίᾳ Τριάδι ἐναριθμούμενον." *Eun.* 3.2.28–29 (SC 2:152).

12. *Spir.* 13.30.30–31 (SC 17:352).

Holy Spirit "confirms all believers unto certain knowledge, true confession, pious worship, and adoration in spirit and truth of God the Father and his Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and of himself [καὶ ἑαυτοῦ]."[13] The Spirit is an object of worship and subject of confession along with the Father and the Son. While not distinctly saying that the Spirit is of the same essence as the Father, Basil affirms a "consubstantial Trinity [Τριάδα ὁμοούσιον]."[14] The Spirit "existed, and preexisted, and coexisted with the Father and the Son before the ages."[15] The Holy Spirit shares titles with the Father and the Son because of "the communion of nature" between them.[16] In one sermon in which he seemed to be egged on by his hearers, he makes one of his most substantial claims about the relationship of the Spirit to the divine essence:

> So, then, whenever we conjoin the Trinity, do not imagine the three as parts of a single indivisible reality—such a thought is impious! Rather, recognize the inseparable consubstantiality [ὁμοουσίαν] of three perfect incorporeals. For wherever the Holy Spirit is present, there also Christ resides. Wherever Christ, there also the Father is clearly present. . . . Those who separate the Spirit from the Father and Son, and number him with the created order, not only make baptism incomplete but also fall short of the confession of faith. For the Trinity does not remain Trinity when the Spirit is subtracted from it.[17]

Despite the fact that Basil never directly claims that the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and the Son, he certainly makes it clear that the Spirit is in eternal community with them in the divine and consubstantial Trinity.

Apart from these citations of particular formulas, Basil makes the overarching argument that the knowledge of the divinity of the Spirit is the result of proclaiming the deeds of the Holy Spirit, as knowledge of God comes from proclaiming the deeds of God:

> [The Spirit] is divine in nature, infinite in greatness, mighty in his works [ἐνεργείαις], good in his blessings. Shall we not exalt him? Shall we not glorify him? I reckon that this "glorifying" is nothing

13. *Concerning Faith* 4 (PG 31, 685C).
14. Ibid. (PG 31, 688A).
15. *Spir.* 19.49.6–7 (SC 17:418).
16. "Τῆς κατὰ τὴν φύσιν οἰκειότητος." *Spir.* 19.48.24–26 (SC 17:418).
17. *Against Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoians* 5 (PG 31, 609AC).

> else but the recounting of his own wonders [θαυμάτων]. . . . to describe his wonders gives him the fullest glorification possible. The same is true for the God and Father of our Lord Christ and the Only-Begotten Son himself; we are only able to glorify them by recounting their wonders to the best of our ability.[18]

By focusing on the activities, wonders, and deeds of the Spirit the theologian is led not only into knowledge of God but a relationship of worship. This characteristic claim of Basil is never abandoned. Knowledge of God comes by virtue of God's activities, and these activities are not revelations of divine essence, but revelations of God's presence. The Christian believer is called by these activities not to know about God (that is, to know the nature of divinity), but to know and thus to worship God—as Basil writes, not to know *what* God is, but to know *how* God is in relation to us.[19]

This project has focused on three aspects of divine activity brought about in the Spirit of God, and each in its own right a product of the Spirit's illumination. The Spirit makes knowledge of God possible by illumination of the believer.[20] The Spirit is a noetic light (φῶς νοητόν),[21] and draws the believer into itself where knowledge of God is possible.[22] This image helps Basil to express something slightly different from the simple augmentation of human capability. The knowledge of God is dependent upon being in the light of God the Spirit. The Spirit does not bestow a new capacity to know God upon the believer that persists outside of the Spirit's presence; the believer is called to stand in the Spirit in order to know God in continuing dependence on the divine light. Along with the metaphor of light, Basil recognizes that "the Scriptures often speak of the Spirit as a place in which people are made holy."[23] The knowledge of God is found *in* the Spirit, as if *in* a place or *in* a ray of light. In baptism, in the understanding of the meaning of creation, and in the understanding of the meaning of Scripture, Basil has built arguments over the course of his career in defense of the divinity of the Spirit. These

18. *Spir.* 23.54.16–27 (SC 17:444–46; Anderson: 86).

19. "When we think about it we find that our notion of the Unbegotten does not fall under examination of 'what it is,' but rather, since I have been pressed I say the term, under the category of 'how it is.'" *Eun.* 1.15.1–4 (SC 1:224).

20. *Spir.* 18.47.1–23 (SC 17:412).

21. Ibid., 9.22.27 (SC 17:324).

22. Ibid., 26.64.

23. Ibid., 26.62.1–3 (SC 17:470).

are arguments built on the foundation of the experience of illumination, the language of Scripture, and the practice of the Christian faith in its traditions.

Baptism is a practice of the Church resulting from the command of Jesus to baptize *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.[24] Basil builds upon a tradition of referring to baptism as illumination to tie the Trinitarian metaphor of light to the baptismal command of Jesus. The noetic picture of illumination that Basil has developed as his primary argument for the divinity of the Spirit is recapitulated in the physical rite of baptism. The believer is brought into the presence of God through the singular activity of a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The invocation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the name of God serves to reemphasize for Basil the justification for worshiping the Spirit as God.

In chapter 3, an argument for the divinity of the Spirit on the basis of the divine act of creation is demonstrated. Scholars have come to understand that Basil deployed a stark Creator-creature distinction in his theology,[25] but have not gone on to explore the results of this notion for Basil's pneumatology. Into this lacuna we can now place the notion of the Holy Spirit as Perfecter (*Teleiōtikon*). This may fall rather flat compared to the role of the Father as cause and Son as actor, but only until a robust theology of creation is understood in Basil including his notions of time and eternity. The perfection of creation is as much a creative act as the inception of creation, in his view. From the perspective of the Trinity, who alone dwells in eternity, the entire time continuum from beginning (*archē*) to end (*telos*) and all that lives, grows, and decays within it is the product of Trinitarian creation. The Spirit is not, in Basil's view, a subordinate divine servant completing the work of the true God; rather, the Spirit is God the Creator who draws creation towards its purpose over the expanse of time.

Basil also developed a nuanced theology of nature, recognizing that knowledge of God is not read off creation like a book, nor is the created order a fingerprint of God. These metaphors leave the creative act sounding passive, as though the created order emanated from God accidentally and without God's control. The created order is not the shadow of God.[26] This is what many have conceived without recognizing that it implies an eternally coexistent universe. Basil separates the divine from the created order, and makes the claim that the

24. Matthew 28:19.

25. "From his earliest writings onwards, Basil in unambiguously clear that there are only two 'realities,' divinity and created nature, and that the Spirit is to be ranked on the side of the divine." Behr, *Nicene*, 314. Cf., "Δύο γὰρ λεγομένων πραγμάτων, θεότητός τε καὶ κτίσεως." *Eun.* 3.2.18 (SC 2:152).

26. *Hex.* 1.7.

created order is not an accidental disclosure of the nature of God, but is an active and intentional communication of God to humankind. This communication, since it discloses knowledge of God, can only be received in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures are also a communication from God that can only be discerned within the self-closed circle of divine revelation—within the noetic light of the Spirit. Chapter 4 explored Basil's view of the Spirit's relationship with Scripture. Basil began with the firmly traditional view that the Spirit spoke through the prophets, which he found to be a view that Eunomius was not willing to maintain. Eunomius does not incorporate the single most common phrase of early Christian dogmatics about the Spirit, that the Spirit "spoke through the prophets," in any of his writings or confessions. In his advice to younger readers of the Greek classics, Basil recognized the need for an intervening principle of discrimination to stand between the mind of the reader and the text on the page. The words could lead to virtue or to vice, but they had to be governed. As his thought developed from a rhetorical to a theological and Trinitarian pattern, Basil recognized that the Spirit stands in the epistemic gap between a word and its meaning. The Spirit directs the meanings of the words on the page as a rhetor might direct a student to find the virtue in the fables of Homer.

In a developed debate with Eunomius over the language appropriate to theology, Basil recognized an epistemic distance between the thing itself and the word that refers to it. This epistemic distance is a gaping void Basil believed could be bridged with the help of the Holy Spirit. The language of Scripture is an introduction into the life of the faithful believer, and draws the reader beyond the words on the page. As with the knowledge of God met in other divine activities, the most profound knowledge may very well abide in the tacit dimension—even though the Bible is a book filled with words. John Behr writes,

> Human beings, according to Basil, do not find themselves passively placed between "thing" and "word," but actively engaged in reflecting upon the revelation of God. And as this engagement is not with the "essence" of God but with his own activity, knowledge of God is not simply expressed in an accurate correlation between word and object, as for Eunomius, but in the active engagement with God's own activity, manifesting our proper rationality, making it articulate, without necessarily being verbalized.[27]

27. Behr, *Nicene*, 290.

Basil argued from the distance between a word and its meaning in his defense of the term *epinoia* in *Against Eunomius*, both in the case of the same man being called Simon, Peter, and Cephas (three different words not referring to three different men) and in the titles of Jesus Christ found in the Gospel of John; even though Christ is referred to as the Shepherd, and the Bread, and the Light, these words may render different concepts, "different *epinoiai*, but all of them referring to one single being with regard to essence."[28] The Spirit bridges the gap between the word and its referent, or meaning.

The Spirit, who stands outside of time as only God can, is also capable of predicting future events and disclosing them to the authors of Scripture. The fulfillment of prophecy is an argument that the Spirit is God. Basil drew on his career in rhetoric to apply a new lexicon of praise to the Holy Spirit, who inspired the language of Scripture and fashioned it according to a higher form of rhetoric than Basil learned in Athens, a form of rhetoric able to draw the reader into the light of God and shape the language of the worshipping church.

As it has been argued throughout, Basil valued the invitation to be drawn into worship much more than the promise of information about the divine essence. He expressed this worshipping relationship with God in the language of illumination, and was not the only figure in history to do so. Origen did before him, and Augustine dwelt on illumination after Basil and the Cappadocians. Basil's theory of divine illumination is unique in some ways, particularly in how directed it is toward the Holy Spirit.

Basil's interest in illumination is founded upon his concern over the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, as part of the process of sanctification of the believer, sheds a divine light over the mind and draws the believer into the light of God's presence where knowledge of God is possible. In the end, this facet of Basil's argument for the divinity of the Holy Spirit is circular. The Spirit is God because it sheds divine light; the light is from God because it reveals the divinity of the Spirit. Basil is aware, as he shares with Amphilochius, that this is a self-closed circle. The demands of others that God is unknown if not known in essence are unrealistic and reveal an ignorance of what it actually means to come into contact with knowledge of God.

> The statement, "If you are ignorant of the essence of God, you worship what you do not know," belongs to children at play. I know that he exists, but the character of his essence is something that I regard as beyond understanding. How then am I saved? Through faith. And it is faith enough to know that God exists, not what he is,

28. *Eun.* 1.7.28–29 (SC 1:190). Cf. ibid., 1.8.27–28 (SC 1:194).

> and that *he is a rewarder to those who seek him* [Heb. 11:6]. Knowledge of his divine essence is recognition of his incomprehensibility; and he is worshipped not on the basis of comprehending what his essence is, but that his essence exists.[29]

Within this circle, the believer may know what God has revealed and come into a position of worship: "If he will give himself up to the assistance of the Spirit, he will know the truth and become acquainted with God. He will become acquainted with him, as the Apostle said, in part, but in the life after this more perfectly."[30] Illumination of knowledge of God can only be accomplished by God. If the Holy Spirit is the Illuminator, then he is God. Basil's argument is intentionally circular. One stands within or without the circle, stands in the light or stands in the shadow.

When Basil refuses to engage the detractor that Gregory of Nazianzus mentioned, he writes to Gregory that this person "peers into the Christian life" as though from the outside and so "I have no answer to give."[31] Theology is the language of the person who stands in the divine light of the Spirit, not outside of it. From Basil's point of view, Eunomius is also an outsider.

> Falling away from the truth makes the mind blind, unable to see. When the mind is empty and demented, it lacks true understanding and thinks that it comprehends things prior to the Only-Begotten; it is as if someone testifies that an eye peering at objects in the dark can see them clearly. *In your light*, it says, *we see light* [Ps. 36:9]. But when Eunomius asserts that he has come to comprehend a point when the light did not yet exist, he is like a delirious man who imagines he sees what is not there. One cannot conceive that which is beyond the Son, since what perceptible light is to the eye, God the Word is to the soul. For it says: *The true light that enlightens every human being was coming into the world* [John 1:9]. So then it follows that the unenlightened soul is incapable of thinking.[32]

29. *Ep.* 234.2.7–14 (Courtonne 3:43).

30. Ibid., 233.2.20–23 (Courtonne 3:41). Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:10-12.

31. Ibid., 71.1.10–11, 24–25 (Courtonne 1:166–67).

32. Ibid., 2.16.9–22 (SC 2:60–62). The same Scripture cluster is redeployed at *Spir.* 18.47. Compare Basil's "What perceptible light is to the eye, God the Word is to the soul," with Plato's "[The sun] in the visible world bears the same relation to sight and what is seen as the Good in the noetic realm bears to mind and what is thought." *Republic* 508C.

Basil's doctrine of illumination is not so much a picture of augmented human capabilities as it is a description of founding knowledge of God upon the experience of being drawn into worship of God. Knowledge of God is available only within the Christian life: in the light of the Spirit.

Basil is not ignorant of the fact that his silence over the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the essence of divinity causes consternation. In a sermon, *Against Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoians*, for example, Basil is aware that his explorations of the relationship between the Father and the Son are not satisfying his hearers:

> I think you do not listen to me because I only dwell on points of confession and do not take up the questions that everybody is talking about right now. Every ear is currently eager to hear a discussion of the Holy Spirit.[33]

He continues with one of his most stirring expositions on the unity of the Trinity, recognizing the "inseparable consubstantiality of three perfect incorporeals," but probably still left his hearers wanting in his explanation of his views on the Holy Spirit. In a letter to a group of monks under his care (c. 375), Basil revealed his awareness that his detractors took his silence over the issue as confirmation of their slanders, "not thinking that our silence was the product of patient forbearance."[34] In hopes of curtailing this, Basil again says exactly what he wishes and what he thinks can be said:

> We confess that which we have received, that with the Father and the Son is placed the Paraclete, who is not counted among creatures. We have come to believe in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. On this basis we never sever the Paraclete from his affinity with the Father and Son. Our mind being illuminated by the Spirit looks up to the Son and, in him as in an image, beholds the Father.[35]

To say this is to refer the questioner to the relationship formed between God and the one who seeks him, and finds a vision of him only within the

33. *Against Sabellians, Arius, and the Anomoians* 4 (PG 31, 608C).

34. *Ep.* 226.1.32–34 (Courtonne 3:24).

35. "Ὁ γὰρ νοῦς ἡμων φωτιζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος πρὸς Υἱὸν ἀναβλέπει καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι θεωρεῖ τὸν Πατέρα." Ibid., 226.3.28–36 (Courtonne 3:27).

illumination of the Spirit. To say more, for Basil, is to depart from the self-closed circle of divine revelation, to leave the spectrum of the divine light that makes knowledge of God possible in the Spirit for the sake of the pretense of objective exploration of the nature of God.

Meletius of Antioch, in a discussion of the meaning of Proverbs 8:22, is reported to have warned against speaking about the ineffable things of God. Since the Spirit has been given to us and in him it is possible to be led to the Son, to worship and pray to God, and to receive words of wisdom,

> why do we meddle with things that pertain to [God's] nature? . . . We must fear lest we be forced to speak about things we are not able to speak; let us no longer assent to speak about thing we are not able to speak about. For it is necessary to speak from faith, not to have faith from the things which are spoken.[36]

Meletius seems to be saying that it is not necessary to define the essence of God in human language; rather, Christians should strive to abide in the Spirit. This sentiment may have very well been part of Basil's affection toward Meletius.[37]

Gregory of Nazianzus was unhappy with the careful and balanced language of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in the end, and later lamented watching the pure-flowing spring of the ancient faith putrefied with infusions of sullied belief.[38] Basil's reserved theological language won out at Constantinople, even after his death. It is his theological emphasis that shaped the creed and helped build the consensus of Christian belief around it. His careful language, which suspends the believer before the revelation of God in a continuing relationship of dependence, left the door open for Macedonians, Pro-Nicenes, and even Homoians to return to common worship. In Basil's language there was room to find renewed unity. Some continue to claim that Basil abrogated his duties as a theologian by failing to address the essential disputes at hand, but for Basil the grammar of theology did not appropriately include discussion of God's essence. His discussion of God was governed by a lexicon of transcendence that dictated how God should be thought of and

36. Epiphanius, *Panarion Against Heresies* 73.32. Cf. Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 370–71.

37. Meletius and Paulinus were both Pro-Nicene bishops vying for the see of Antioch for many years. Basil was loyal to Meletius, worried that Paulinus was leaning toward Marcellus's Sabellianism. *Ep.* 263.5; Behr, *Nicene*, 106, 120.

38. *Carmen, Autobiography (De Vita Sua)* 1703–14; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Continuum, 2006), 327–29; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 53.

worshiped within a relationship of faith, in the Spirit. It did not make claims of necessity on the essence of divinity.

Basil's theology of the Holy Spirit demonstrates an intentional and disciplined theological reserve intended to illustrate the necessity of God's work on the human mind to affect the knowledge of himself. What seems like compromise or a failure of nerve is actually the most profound and daring claim that a theologian can make. Theology is not the sum of rational thinking about God. The words used in theology remain contingent upon God's own faithfulness to act, resting on a hope of what is unseen, in reference to a God who is unknowable, but who makes himself known in the minds of believers who stand in his eternal and divine light—in the Spirit of God.

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ISBN 978-1-4514-8277-5

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